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PAUL JONES.

PAUL JONES:

A NAUTICAL ROMANCE.

BY

ALEXANDER DUMAS,

AUTHOR OF

"THE THREE MUSKETEERS," "TWENTY YEARS AFTER," ETC., ETC.

TRANSLATED BY

HENRY LLEWELLYN WILLIAMS.

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PAUL JONES:

A NAUTICAL ROMANCE.

CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERIOUS MAN-OF-WAR.

TOWARDS the close of a fine October afternoon in the year 1779, the idlers of the little town of Port Louis, Brittany, were gathered on the jut of land parallel to the similar promontory on which L'Orient is built across the bay. The sight attracting their attention, and forming the text for their chatter, was a fine and noble 32-gun frigate, lying at anchor, not in the harbour, but in a small inlet of the roads; she had suddenly been found there one morning, a week before, like a flower of the sea shot up in a night.

This man-of-war, which seemed to be on her first cruise, so trim and dainty was she, had flown the French colours, now unfolded by the breeze, so that the three golden lily-flowers shone in the final beams of the setting sun. What most particularly excited the curiosity of the lovers of this kind of sight, so frequent, yet ever so fresh in a seaport, was the general indecision about the country where this wondrous ship had been built. Stripped of her sails, which were snugly stowed in under the yards, the superior slenderness of her spars, and the graceful outline of her hull, were clearly defined against the luminous west.

Some fancied that they recognised the bold and lofty masts of the American navy; but the perfection of minutiæ distinguishing the rest of the structure visibly contrasted with the still barbaric crudeness of Albion's rebel sons. Others, deceived by the flag she carried, puzzled to tell what French yard had launched her; but soon all national vanity yielded to evidence, for it was in vain that on her stern was sought that heavy mass of sculpture and ornamentation which formed the obligatory adornment of all daughters of the ocean or Mediterranean created in the docks of Brest or Toulon; others, still aware that a flag is often only a mask intended to hide the true face, maintained that the towers and lions of Spain would be more fitly placed apeak than the fleur-de-lis of France;

but these were rebuked with the question whether those flowing and slender sides resembled the bluff and bulging run of Spanish galleons.

Lastly, there were a few ready to have sworn that this charming water-witch had sprung from the fogs of Holland, had not the height and delicacy of the masts, by their dangerous riskiness, given the lie to the prudent constructions of the ex-sweepers of the seas.

At all events, though, as stated, this bewitching object had been a week in view on the coast of Brittany, no clue had settled opinions, still fluctuating at the period when we open these first pages of our story, since none of the crew had come ashore on any pretext whatever. The very existence of a ship's company might almost have been questioned, for the vessel would seem uninhabited, except for the marine sentry and the officer of the watch, whose heads sometimes passed above the bulwarks.

Nevertheless, it appeared that this craft, however unknown she remained, had no hostile intention, for her coming had not seemed to trouble the authorities of L'Orient and she had placed herself under the fire of a small fort, put in order since the declaration of war between France and England; the extended necks of its heavy guns stuck out beyond its walls over the heads of the inquisitive loungers.

Among the throng a young man made himself conspicuous by the restless eagerness of his questions. Without anyone being able to guess the cause, it was easy to see that he took a direct interest in the mysterious cruiser. As in his stylish garb had been recognised the uniform of the Royal Musketeers, life-guards who rarely quitted the capital, he had been at first a distraction to the curiosity of the crowd, but presently the man taken for a stranger turned out to be Count d'Auray, the last scion of one of the oldest county families.

The castle inhabited by his family stood on the cliffs of the Gulf of Morbihan, half-a-dozen leagues from Port Louis.

This family was composed of the Marquis d'Auray, a poor old crazed man, who had not been seen outside the limits of his estate these twenty years; the Marchioness, a woman whose strictness of manners and antiquity of race could alone excuse her aristocratic haughtiness; Marguerite, a gentle girl of seventeen or eighteen, pale and fragile as the flower whose name she bore, and Count Emmanuel, whom we have just presented.

Around him the multitude assembled, submitting to the usual glamour of a noble title, brilliant uniform, and the insolent demeanour of the nobility.

However, be the desire what it might of those he addressed to satisfy his inquiries, they could answer only in a vague and indecisive way, as all they knew about the frigate was what they learnt amongst one another by their interchanged communi-

cations. Count Emmanuel was therefore about to withdraw when he saw a boat approaching the jetty, pulled by six men; it brought straight towards the groups scattered along the strand a new character who could not fail to draw attention upon himself at a moment when curiosity was so intensely excited.

This was a man who appeared aged some twenty or two-and-twenty years, at the most, and who wore the uniform of a naval cadet. He was sitting, or, rather, reclining on a bearskin, with one hand resting on the tiller of the little cutter, while the pilot and steersman who had nothing to do from this whim of his superior, sat in the bow. As soon as this boat was sighted, everybody turned towards it, as if it brought a last hope of their obtaining information so longed for.

It was therefore in the midst of a good part of the population of Port Louis that the cutter, impelled by the final effort of its rowers, grounded eight or ten feet off the shore, the shallowness at this point not allowing it to run farther on land. Two of the oarsmen instantly shipped their oars by laying them along in the bottom of the boat, and stepped out into the water only up to the knees.

Then the young officer leisurely rose, strode along to the prow and let the sailors take him up in their arms and carry him ashore in order that not a drop of brine should spot his gay uniform. Having landed, he ordered the coxswain to take the boat round the spit, which ran three or four hundred paces into the sea, and wait for him on the other side of it.

He himself lingered for an instant on the beach to repair the disorder of his hair, due to the mode of transportation which he had been forced to adopt, and, next, humming a French song, he proceeded to the threshold of the little port, which he crossed after having airily returned the sentinel the military salute which he had given him as a superior.

Though nothing was more natural in the seaport than to see a naval officer cross the roads and enter the fortifications, such was the enthralment of minds that there was not one, perhaps, of all the components of the crowd scattered on the shore, who did not imagine that the visit paid to the commandant of the port related to the strange vessel which was the object of all conjecture.

Hence, when the young officer reappeared under the portals, he found himself almost crushed in so eager a ring that he manifested for an instant the intention of clearing away a space with the cane he carried; but, after having whistled two or three times with most impertinent affectation, he suddenly seemed to change his intention, and catching sight of Count Emmanuel—whose uncommon bearing and elegant attire contrasted with the vulgar mien and apparel of those about him— he walked to meet him at the very juncture when he, too, took a step to approach him.

The two officers merely exchanged one rapid glance, but that sufficed for them to recognise by indubitable tokens that they were men of birth and position. The consequence was that they bowed to one another with that graceful ease and familiar politeness characterizing the youths of good society of the times.

"Egad! my dear fellow-countryman," ejaculated the young lieutenant, "for I take you to be French like myself, though met in a hyperborean country and regions at least fairly barbarian if not utterly wild—can you tell me what there is about me extraordinary that I am turning the land topsy-turvy, or is it that a naval officer is so rare and curious a sight at L'Orient that his presence alone raises the curiosity of the natives of Lower Brittany to this point? By so doing, I own, you will do me a favour which I shall be delighted to repay if ever a similar opportunity for me to be useful to you should present itself."

"It will be the easier matter," responded the count, "from this curiosity being nowise offensive to your uniform or hostile to your person; the proof of which is, my dear brother officer—for I see by your epaulettes that we hold about the same rank in his Majesty's forces—that I share with these honest Bretons the curiosity for which you reproach them, though I have probably more positive motives than theirs to wish a solution of the problem they are puzzling out at present speaking."

"Well," proceeded the seaman, "if I can help you in any way in the search you are undertaking, I place my algebra at your call; but we are badly posted here to indulge in mathematical demonstrations. Do you mind leaving these good fellows a little aside, for they will only embroil our calculations?"

"Not at all," replied the musketeer, "so much the better, as, if I do not mistake, I shall bring you back to your boat and crew by proceeding this way."

"Oh, never mind that! if this were not a way pleasing you, take another. I have time to spare, and my men are still less in a hurry than I. So, let us go inland, if such be your good pleasure."

"Not so, please; let us, on the contrary, go shoreward, for the nearer the water's edge we shall be, the better we can talk of the matter I wish your word upon. Let us, therefore, walk on this neck of land as long as it affords a footing."

Without answering, the young seaman continued to step out like one to whom the impulse given him was completely indifferent, and the two young gentlemen, although meeting for the first time, walked on, arm-in-arm, like two friends from boyhood, towards the point of the cape, which was prolonged into the sea like the shaft of a lance.

When at the end, Count Emmanuel stopped and inquired of his companion, as he stretched out his hand in the direction of the ship:

"Do you know what that vessel is?"

The young seaman cast a rapid and scrutinizing glance on the speaker; then, carrying it towards the man-of-war, he negligently rejoined:

"Why, that's a pretty frigate, carrying thirty-two guns, and riding by her kedge-anchor with all her sails loose in the furlings so as to be ready to sail at the first signal."

"Pardon me," remarked Emmanuel, smiling, "but that is not what I asked. I little care what number of guns she carries, or at what anchor she rides, as, I believe, you expressed it." The seaman smiled now in his turn. "But," continued Emmanuel, "what I want to know is the true nation to which she belongs, the port of her destination, and her captain's name."

"As for her nation," replied the other, "she has taken care to inform us herself, or it would be a shameful lie. Do you not see the flag floating at her peak? it is the stainless flag—a little worn from having been too long in use, that's all. As for her destination, it is—as you were told when you asked the commandant of the fortified place—Mexico."

Emmanuel regarded the young lieutenant with amazement.

"Lastly, as for her captain, it is harder to say. Some swear that he is a young man of my age or yours—for I believe we were in the cradle about the same time, although the profession we both exercise may put a broad interval between our graves. Others assert that he is of the same age as my uncle, the Count d'Estaing, who has been appointed admiral, as you no doubt know, and is helping, with an armed hand, the American 'rebels,' as some still style them in France. As for his name, that is another thing: it is pretended that he does not himself know it, and, while awaiting some happy chance to inform him, calls himself plain Paul."

"Paul?"

"Yes, Captain Paul."

"Paul what?"

"Paul of the *Providence*, the *Ranger*, the *Alliance*—according to what ship he is master of. Are there not in France also some of our young sprigs of nobility who, thinking their family title too short, lengthen it with the name of an estate, and surmount the whole with a knight's helm or a baron's torteau, so that their seal and carriage-blazon wear an air of an ancient house pleasant to behold? Well, so it is with him. For the present, I believe, he calls himself Captain Paul of the *Indienne*, and is proud of it; for, if I may judge by my sympathy as a seaman, I believe that he would not exchange his frigate for the finest landed estate between Brest Harbour and the mouth of the Rhône."

"But, to the point," resumed Emmanuel, after having for an instant reflected on the singular blending of irony and simplicity which, turn by turn, pierced through the other's replies, "what is the man's character?"

"His character? Oh, but my dear—baron—count—marquis——?"

"Count," answered the nobleman, bowing.

"Well, my dear count, I have

to say that you drive me from one abstract idea to another, and when I put my algebraic knowledge at your disposal it was not at all for us to wander in search of the unknown. His character? Why, goodness gracious! my dear lord, who can speak understandingly of any man's character, his own excepted? and even that is not easy. Look at me! For twenty years I have furrowed the vast plain which spreads before us; now on the deck of a cockle-shell, then on a frigate, and my days—if so I may express myself—saw the ocean at the same time as the sky. Since my tongue could join two words, and my intelligence weld two ideas, I have studied and questioned the caprices of Old Ocean. Well, I do not yet know its character, and yet four principal winds and thirty-two minor ones agitate it; that is all. How can you expect me to judge man, tossed, as he is, by a thousand passions?"

"Consequently, my dear—duke—marquis—count——?"

"Lieutenant," replied the young seaman, bowing as Emmanuel had done.

"I was saying that I do not ask you, my dear lieutenant, for a course of philosophy on the passions of Captain Paul. I merely wished to inquire on two points of you: firstly, do you believe him a man of honour?"

"In the first place, my dear count, we must have a mutual agreement on words. What do you precisely mean by honour?"

"Allow me to tell you, my dear lieutenant, that your question is very odd. Honour is honour."

"That is just the dilemma; a word without any definition, like the word beauty. Beauty also is beauty, and everybody worships beauty after his own fancy. The Greeks adore it as a lovely fair woman, and the Hottentots as a corpulent black. So it is with honour. There is the Cid kind of honour, that of Coriolanus, and that of the Apostate Julian. Make your question more clear if you want me to answer it."

"I ask if one may rely on his promise?"

"Oh, in that respect, I do not believe he has ever failed. His enemies—and it does not come to pass that he should have none—his enemies themselves, I say, never doubt that he will carry out to the death any pledge he gives; so that point is cleared up, believe me. Under that head he is a man of honour. Pass on to the second question, for if I am not far wrong, you still desire to learn something?"

"Yes; if he will faithfully obey an order of his Majesty?"

"Which Majesty?"

"Really, my dear lieutenant, you pretend a hardness of comprehension which appears to me infinitely better suiting the gown of the sophist than the sailor's jacket."

"How so? You accuse me of duplicity because I want to know to what I am to reply before replying. At this hour there are nearly a dozen crowned heads more or less unsteadily placed on the divers thrones of Europe; we have his Catholic

Majesty, an enfeebled wreck, who lets the inheritance leagued to him by Charles V. be torn away shred by shred; we have his obstinate Britannic Majesty, who clings to his America as Cynegirus to the Persian galley, and whose hands will be lopped off if he does not let go; we have his most Christian Majesty, whom I venerate and honour——"

"The very one I want to talk about," interrupted Emmanuel, "Do you believe Captain Paul would obey an order which I would bear to him from that quarter?"

"Captain Paul," the lieutenant made answer, "will, as any captain should do, obey all orders emanating from the power having the right to command him, unless he be some confounded corsair, condemned pirate, or creedless filibuster — which I doubt from the cut of his frigate's jib and the way she is kept. In a drawer of his cabin desk he must have a regular commission, signed by some power. If, then, that commission bears the name of Louis, and is sealed with the three lily-flowers of France, there is no doubt that he will obey all orders sealed by the same seal and signed by the same name."

"That is all I wanted to know," replied the young musketeer, beginning to be nettled by the odd responses. "I have no more than one request to make."

"I am at your orders, M. le Comte," replied the seaman, "in this as in all other matters."

"Do you know a means of going aboard that ship?"

"There's one," answered the seaman, extending his hand towards his boat, rocked by the tide in a little creek.

"Why, that's your boat!"

"And I'll take you aboard."

"Are you, then, acquainted with this Captain Paul?"

"I? Not the least in the world. But, as an admiral's nephew, I naturally know all the ship captains, and even from the boatswain steering the jolly-boat in search of fresh water to the vice-admiral commanding the squadron going under fire. Besides, we seamen have secret signs—a kind of masonic language, by aid of which we recognise our brothers in any part of the ocean where we meet. So, then, accept my offer with the same freedom as it is made. My men and my boat are at your disposition."

"Well," said Emmanuel, "do me this last service, and——"

"And you will forget how my straggling talk has 'bored' you, eh?" interrupted the young officer, smiling. "It cannot be helped, my dear lord," continued he, while making a sign to the boat's crew, which was instantly understood, "the loneliness of the watery waste gives us sons of the sea the habit of monologue. In the calm, we whistle for a breeze, and in the gale we beg for a lull, and in the dead of night we speak to heaven."

Emmanuel cast a doubting gaze on his companion, who bore it with that seeming good nature spreading over his face every time he became the musketeer's object of investigation. The latter was astonished at this med-

ley of contempt for human things and poetry for Divine creations; but, at bottom, only seeing in the strange man before him a person disposed to render the service he sought, though under odd forms, he accepted the offer.

Five minutes subsequently the two young men were carried on towards the enigmatical cruiser with all the swiftness imparted to the cutter by the combined efforts of six vigorous sailors, whose oars rose and fell with so much regularity that the movement setting them in action seemed due to a spring, and not to a combination of human forces.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRISONER OF STATE.

As they advanced the graceful shape of the vessel was developed to their eyes in all the admirable perfection of the details, and although, from want of familiarity or vocation, the young Count d'Auray was ordinarily far from sensitive to beauty arrayed in this form, he could not help admiring the elegance of the swell of the hull, the slenderness with strength of the masts, and the fineness of the rigging, which seemed, on the sky still tinged with the dying sunbeams, flexible silk threads woven by some gigantic spider.

The previous stillness reigned on the ship, as if, from scorn or indifference, it was but faintly troubled by the visit about to be received. For a moment the young lifeguardsman fancied he perceived the end of a telescope levelled at him in the square gap of a porthole alongside the stoppered mouth of a cannon; but the vessel in the slow, semi-circular swing imparted to it by the heaving of the ocean, brought her bow before him. His eyes became fixed upon the carved figurehead which usually gives the name to the ship so adorned. This represented one of the aboriginal daughters of America, discovered by Columbus and conquered by Cortez, in a cap of a thousand-coloured feathers, and with nude bosom ornamented with a coral necklace. The rest of the body, siren and serpent like, intertwined itself in a fantastic manner, among bizarre arabesques, with the cutwater and "eyes." The nearer the boat approached the craft, the more fascinating was this figure to the count's view. Indeed, it was a piece of sculpture not only uncommon in form but most remarkable in execution, and it was readily perceived that it was no vulgar woodcutter but an artist of talent who had shaped it out of the block of oak where it had slumbered for ages.

On his side the lieutenant remarked with professional satisfaction the growing attention which the land-officer was forced to give the ship. Finally, noticing that this attention was wholly concentrated on the figure just described, he appeared to await the count's opinion with marked anxiety; seeing that it was slow to be manifested, though they were now near enough for none of the beauties to be overlooked, he took the course of breaking the silence by questioning him.

"Well, count," he said, concealing his interest in the reply under an apparent gaiety, "what do you say about this masterpiece?"

"Relatively to works of the

same kind which I have seen, it really deserves the name you give it," rejoined Emmanuel.

"Yes," went on the officer carelessly, "it is the best production of Guillaume Coustou, who died before he finished it; that was done by his pupil, one Dupré, a man of merit, who is dying of want and has to chop wood instead of chiselling marble, and hew ships' prows when he ought to be sculpturing statues. See!" continued the young seaman, giving the tiller a push which made the cutter deviate so as to go around the vessel instead of running up alongside, "that is a real coral necklace around her neck, and real, too, are those pearls dangling in her ears. As for her eyes, each pupil is a diamond, worth a hundred golden guineas with King William's head on them. The upshot is that the captain who captures that witch will, besides the honour of taking her, have a splendid wedding present to make his bride."

"What a queer fancy," ejaculated Emmanuel, carried away himself by the oddness of the sight offered to his gaze, "to deck out a ship like an animate being, and throw away considerable amounts on the chances of battle and tempest!"

"It cannot be helped," returned the naval officer with a tone of indescribable sadness, "we seamen, who have no family but our shipmates, no country but the ocean, no sights but the storm, and no amusement but fighting, we must attach ourselves to something. Having no lady-loves, d ye see (for who would care a fig for us—human gulls with wings always spread?) we must harbour an imaginary sweetheart. One finds it in a fresh, shady islet, and every time he spies it from afar, looming up out of the green water like a basket of flowers, his heart warms as jolly as a bird's on sighting its nest again. Another picks out a star to be cherished among all the stars, and, during the fine, long nights on the Atlantic, every time he crosses the Line, it seems to him that she stoops down towards him and signals him with a brighter flash and a warmer glow. Then there's others—the greatest number—who grow fond of their barkey as you may of a beloved woman; these groan every time the gale snaps a spar or the cannon ball wounds her—and, when she has been crushed by blow or battle, these would rather go down with her than be saved without her, and they give the landsmen a holy example of fidelity by being engulfed with the object of their love in the deepest abysses of the ocean. Captain Paul is one of this sort, that's all; and he has given his cruiser the presents he intended for his sweetheart. But there they are, rousing up."

"Boat ahoy!" was shouted on the frigate. "What do you want?"

"To come aboard," responded Emmanuel; "hold us out a rope or a boathook, something or other that we may catch hold of."

"Go round to the starboard

side and you'll find the ladder."

The oarsmen obeyed the injunction instantly and, a few seconds after, the young gentlemen were next a swinging ladder which led up to the deck. The officer of the watch came to the gangway to welcome them with an alacrity which seemed of good augury to the visitor.

"Lieutenant," said the young officer to the young man, who seemed, from being clothed like himself, to hold about the same grade, "this is a friend of mine, —Count——by-the-way, I forgot to ask your name."

"Count Emmanuel d'Auray."

"I was saying that this is my friend, Count Emmanuel d'Auray, who strongly wishes to speak to Captain Paul. Is he aboard?"

"He has just come," replied the officer.

"In that case, I will go below to notify him of your visit, my dear count. In the meantime, Lieutenant Walters, here, will take pleasure in showing you over the ship. It is a curious sight for a land-officer, and all the more from my doubting that you will find many kept like this. Isn't it supper time?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then it will be all the more entertaining."

"But I am on watch," remonstrated the officer, hesitating.

"Pshaw! you can easily find one of your brother officers to take your place for a spell. I shall try not to have the captain keep you too long. Soon again, count! I shall speak for you so as to have you receive a hearty welcome."

On these words the speaker disappeared by the cabin stairs, while the officer, standing beside Emmanuel to serve as his guide, conducted him between decks into the battery.

As the count's companion had presumed, the crew were at supper.

This was the first time the nobleman had witnessed such a spectacle, and despite his desire to speak promptly with the captain, it was so interesting that he could not help giving entire attention to it.

Between each piece of artillery and in the space reserved for working them were a table and forms, not standing on legs but suspended by ropes from the beams. On every bench four men were seated, and each was hacking away at a chunk of beef, which resisted as hard as it could, but had to deal with rogues who did not seem the sort to be rebuffed by its defence. On each table were two jugs of wine, half a bottle to a man. The bread did not appear to be served out by ration, but taken as they pleased. The most profound silence ruled among the crew, composed of not less than a hundred and eighty or two hundred men.

Though not one of the revellers opened his mouth for any other purpose than eating, Emmanuel remarked with astonishment the variety of their origin, easily recognisable by the general and characteristic types of each physiognomy. His cicerone noticed his surprise, and replying to his thoughts before outspoken, said, with an Ameri-

can accent which Emmanuel had already observed as proving he was born on the other side of the Atlantic,

"Yes, yes; we have here a pretty sample enough of all people of the world, and if another deluge swamped the sons of Noah, as befell Adam's children, in our ark would be found the seed of every nation. Just look at those three lads bartering a slice of their beef for a clove of garlic — they are sons of Galicia whom we picked up off Cape Ortegal; they never go into action without making a prayer to Saint Jago, but once the prayer is over they would let themselves be cut to pieces like martyrs rather than draw back a foot. Those two polishing the table at the expense of their sleeves are honest Hollanders, who have not done yet complaining of the harm wrought to their trade by the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope. As you see, they have the aspect at first sight of beer kegs, but when they hear the beating to quarters they become as nimble as mountaineers. Go up to them, and they will brag of their forefathers, having no deeds of their own to boast of; they will tell you they descend from those famous 'Sweepers of the Sea' who, when they sailed into battle, ran up a broom instead of a flag; but they will take good heed not to add that one fine day the English took their besom and made switches of it for Mynheer. That whole table yonder, where whispering is going on, as loud talking is not allowed, is surrounded by Frenchmen. Their place of honour is held by a chief of their own election, a born Parisian, a cosmopolitan from taste, and a master at singlestick, fencing, and dancing; always jolly and contented. He sings over his work, and fights singing—ay, will die singing unless a hempen cravat stifles his voice in his gullet, as may happen to him if he has the bad luck to fall into an enemy's hands who deems privateer is pirate writ small. Turn your eyes from here, now, and see that file of square, bony heads. These are strange to you, eh? but any American born between Hudson's Bay and the Gulf of Mexico would instantly recognise the freshwater bears of Lake Erie or the sharks of Nova Scotia. Three or four of them have only one eye apiece; that comes from gouging! a kind of fighting which is carried up and down the Mississippi, more's the pity.

"The combatant twines his adversary's forelock around his fore and middle finger to get a purchase, and with the thumb makes the eye leap from the socket. Hence, when we come to boarding a ship, these rarely fail to sling away pike and cutlass, and closing with a foeman, 'go for his eye' with a speed and skill which would please an oculist to see. You must allow that I am not deceiving you, and that our wild-beast show is complete."

"But," said Emmanuel, who had listened to the long enumeration with marked interest, "how does your commander make himself understood by all these

fellows gathered from so many different points?"

"In the first place, the captain knows all languages; then, in storm or battle, though he uses his mother-tongue, he gives it such a tone that, believe me, every man understands and obeys. But, look! there's the port-cabin door opening; no doubt he is ready to receive you."

Indeed, a boy wearing a midshipman's uniform came out towards the two officers, to ask Emmanuel if he were not the Count d'Auray, and, on his affirmative response, begged the young musketeer to follow him. Whereupon the officer, who had so conscientiously acted the part of cicerone, went up on deck to resume the post he had temporarily quitted, while Emmanuel proceeded towards the door with an emotion of mingled curiosity and uneasiness, for, at last, he was going to see "Captain Paul."

This was a man who appeared to be fifty, or five-and-fifty years of age, who stooped, rather, however, by the lowness between decks than age itself. He wore the uniform of the French navy in all its strict severity; a royal blue coat with scarlet *revers*, a red waistcoat and breeches, grey stockings and lace cuffs and ruffles. His hair, rolled up in sausage side-curls and powdered, was bound at the roots behind with a ribbon having loose, floating ends. His three-cocked hat and sword were laid on a table near him.

At the moment of Emmanuel appearing on the sill, he was seated on a gun-carriage, but, on seeing him, he rose.

The young Frenchman was daunted by the aspect of this man; in his eye was an investigatory ray which seemed to carry light into the soul of him he regarded. Perhaps this impression was all the more powerful from his feeling full consciousness of having some self-reproach about the unusual action he was performing—one in which he came to make the captain at least the executor, if not an accomplice. As if both felt a secret repulsion for one another, they saluted with reserve, though with politeness.

"I have the honour of speaking with the Count d'Auray, I believe?" inquired the old officer.

"And I, to Captain Paul," replied the young soldier.

Both bowed a second time.

"May I learn to what happy chance I owe the honour of the visit made me by the heir of one of the oldest and most celebrated titles in Brittany?"

Emmanuel bowed still again by way of thanks; and, after a short pause, as if he had a difficulty in opening the conversation, he began:

"Captain, I have been told that your destination is the Gulf of Mexico?"

"You were not deceived, my lord, for I intend sailing for New Orleans, touching at Cayenne and Havanna."

"This falls very nicely in, captain, and you would not have to turn out of your course, always supposing that you would charge yourself to execute the order of which I am the bearer."

"Oh, you have an order to communicate to me, my lord,—from whom?"

"From the Minister of the Navy."

"An order addressed to me personally?" questioned the captain with the accent of doubt.

"Not personal to you, captain, but to all commanders of the king's ships sailing for South America."

"What is the business, my lord?"

"There is a state prisoner to be transported to Cayenne."

"Have you the order upon you?"

"This is it," responded Emmanuel, taking a paper from his pocket and presenting it to the other.

Carrying it to the window to profit by the last sunbeams, he read aloud:

"The Minister of the Navy and the Colonies orders all captains or lieutenants commanding ships of the State and sailing for South America or the Gulf of Mexico, to take aboard and land at Cayenne, one Lusignan, condemned to perpetual exile. During the voyage the prisoner must eat in private and hold no communication with the ship's company."

"Is the order in proper form?" inquired Emmanuel.

"Quite," answered the captain.

"And are you ready to carry it out?"

"Am I not under the order of the Minister of the Navy?"

"Then the prisoner may be transferred to your charge?"

"Whenever you like, my lord. But it ought to be as soon as possible, for I do not intend standing off and on in these waters."

"I will see that diligence is shown."

"Is this all you have to say to me?"

"Entirely so, captain, and I have no more to add but thanks."

"Add nothing, my lord. The minister orders and I obey—that's all; I am fulfilling a duty and not rendering a service."

On these words, the captain and the count saluted anew, and parted more coldly than they had met.

On reaching the deck, Emmanuel inquired after his companion of the officer of the watch, who replied that Captain Paul had asked him to stay to supper; still, as he was ever obliging and eager to please, he had left his boat at the nobleman's call. Indeed, it was at the foot of the hanging stairs, and the rowers, with oars held up perpendicularly, were waiting to bear him ashore. Scarcely had d'Auray gone down into it than it shot away with as much rapidity as it had come, but it went silently and dully, for the sea-cadet was no longer here to enliven the chat with the axioms of his poetic philosophy.

That same night, the prisoner was conveyed on board the *Indienne*; and when day-break appeared, the idlers vainly looked on the ocean for the frigate which had originated so many conjectures during a week, and whose unexpected arrival, resultless stay, and spontaneous departure ever remained an inexplicable mystery to the worthy inhabitants of Port Louis.

CHAPTER III.

THE SEA-FIGHT.

As the motives bringing Captain Paul to the coast of Brittany are only connected with our story by the events related, we leave our readers in the same uncertainty as the good folk of Port Louis, and though our avocation and our sympathy naturally draw us landward, we must follow him for two or three days, still in his adventurous cruise on the seas.

The weather was as fair as it can be in the western waters in the early days of autumn. The *Indienne* sailed splendidly before the wind; the careless sailors comforted themselves with the aspect of the skies; and, with the exception of some men who were busy sailing the ship, the rest, dispersed in the different parts of the vessel, were killing time as they listed, when a voice which seemed to drop out of heaven, shouted:—

"Below, there, ahoy!"

"Ay, ay," replied the boatswain, who was forward, "what is it?"

"A sail," said the look-out.

"A sail," repeated the petty-officer. "Officer of the watch, please pass the word to the captain."

"A sail, a sail," reiterated all the men scattered on the main-deck, for at that moment a wave, heaving up the vessel which appeared on the horizon, made it visible to all eyes, though the less expert gaze of a passenger or soldier would have certainly taken it for the wing of a gull flat on the ocean.

"A sail," in his turn exclaimed a young man of twenty-five, springing up on the main deck, by the companion ladder; "ask Mr. Arthur what he makes of it."

"Mr. Arthur," called out the lieutenant, in English, using his speaking-trumpet not to fatigue himself uselessly, "the captain asks what the sail seems to be."

"Why, sir," replied in the same language the young midshipman, who had been questioned and who had gone up into the lower rigging as soon as the sail was sighted, "she strikes me as a full-rigged ship close-hauled to come down this way. Oh! there goes her main-sail shaken out."

"Ay," said the young man to whom Lieutenant Walters had given the title of captain, "he has as sharp eyes as we, and he has seen us. It's just as well. If he is fond of a chat, he will find one to speak up to him. Besides, our guns ought to feel choked, since they have had their mouths stopped so long.

Pass the word there to the gunner that a suspicious sail is in sight, so that he may not be taken unawares.

"Well, Mr. Arthur, what kind of a craft is she?" he added, raising his head towards the crosstrees of the foretop, where the cadet had paused for observation.

"A man-of-war, captain, man-of-war. Though we cannot see her flag I warrant ye that she has a royal commission aboard."

"Think ye so? a cruiser, whose commander is specially commanded to seek a frigate called the *Indienne*, with the promise, in case of capture, of promotion to a captaincy if only a lieutenant, and to a commodore-ship if a captain already. Oh, there go his flying topsails! Undoubtedly the hound scents us and means to give us chase. Set the same canvas on the frigate, Mr. Walters, and hold your course without falling off a point; we shall see if he dares cross our course!"

The order given by the captain was forthwith repeated by the lieutenant, and soon the ship, heretofore under her topsails only, unfolded, like three clouds, her top-gallant sails, so that, like the other, and as if animated by sight of the enemy, the frigate bounded forward, burying her prow more deeply in the rollers, and shooting the quivering foam from both sides of the cut-water.

There came a moment of silent awaiting, by which we profit to turn our reader's attention upon the officer dubbed captain by the lieutenant.

This was no longer the sceptical and boyish officer whom we have seen conveying the Count d'Auray on board the frigate, or the old seadog, "shell-backed" and loud and curt in voice who had received him in the cabin; but, as mentioned, a man of twenty-five. Having cast aside all disguise, he appeared with his natural figure in the fanciful costume which he adopted when, fairly on blue water, he could only be seen by sea, sky and storm. This was a long-skirted black velvet frock-coat, with gold frogs, drawn in at the waist by a Turkish sash in which were stuck a pair of pistols, not such as boarders use, but for duelling, engraved, chiselled and inlaid like those weapons of luxury which seem worn rather for ornament than defence. He wore white kerseymere tights, with wrinkled Hessian boots, coming up below the knee. Around his neck floated as a loose tie one of those East Indian handkerchiefs of transparent tissue, and worked with flowers in their natural colours; down each cheek, sunburnt and glowing with hope, fell, after rising at each gust of wind, his long hair, which, unpowdered, had become ebony black. Near him, on the stern chaser, was placed a steel cap with mailed straps to clasp under the chin; it was his fighting gear, and his only defensive armour. Several deep dents in the metal proved that it had more than once protected the head beneath from the horrible gashes made by the cutlasses used by sailors. The rest of the crew wore the uniform of the French

navy in all its strict and exact good taste.

During this time the vessel signalled twenty minutes before by the look-out as a white speck on the horizon had become a pyramid of sails and spars. All eyes were fixed upon it, and though no order had been issued every man had made his individual arrangements as if battle had been decided upon. Therefore, that deep and solemn silence reigned upon the *Indienne* which, on a man-of-war, always precedes the first orders given out by the commander. When the vessel had been growing larger for several minutes, the hull seemed to rise out of the water as the sails had successively done. It could then be seen that she was a ship a little heavier in tonnage than the *Indienne*, and carrying thirty-six guns.

Like the frigate, she sailed without showing any flag, so that, as her men, too, were hidden behind the bulwarks, it was impossible, unless by peculiar tokens, to identify the nation to which she belonged. These two observations were formed almost at the same time by the captain, although he seemed struck by the latter alone.

"It appears to me that we are going to have an incident out of a masquerade," he said to his first officer. "Get some flags out, Arthur, and show our stranger that the *Indienne* is a coquette who has many disguises at her beck; and you, Mr. Walters, have the small-arms served out, as we cannot in these waters expect to meet other than enemies."

The two orders had no reply but their execution. At the end of an instant the midshipman took from a locker by the stern rail a dozen different flags, and Lieutenant Walters, having had the armoury opened, formed stacks of pikes, hatchets and cutlasses at different spots on the deck ere he returned to occupy his previous stand beside the captain.

Every man went to his post rather through instinct than duty, for the beating to quarter had not sounded, so that the apparent disorder which had briefly reigned on board gradually ceased, and the frigate became silent and attentive once more.

Meanwhile, by following their convergent lines, both vessels neared one another. When they were about three cannon shots apart the captain said,

"Mr. Walters, I think it time to fog our friend. Show him the Scotch flag."

The lieutenant made a sign to the yeoman of the signals, and the red flag with the blue canton rose like a flame above the poop of the *Indienne*, but no sign on board of the strange craft indicated that she gave the least heed to the operation.

"I see," muttered the captain, "the three leopards of England have so well drawn the teeth and cut the nails of the lion of Scotland that they pay no more attention to him, thinking him tamed because he is defenceless. Show him another, Mr. Walters, we may manage to unlock his tongue."

"Which one, captain?"

"Take at random — chance will serve us."

Scarcely was the sentence uttered before down ran the Scottish ensign, and that of Sardinia took its place. The ship remained mute.

"Ha!" said the captain, "it appears that his Majesty, King George, is on good terms with his brother of Cyprus and Jerusalem. Let us not embroil them by carrying the joke too far. Mr. Walters, run up the colours of Columbia and emphasize the flag with a blank shot."

The same operation was renewed, and the descending flag fell on the deck as the stars and stripes of the thirteen United States slowly flew upwards, "confirmed" by an unshotted gun.

What the captain anticipated came to pass: upon this symbol of rebellion, shown insolently, the stranger ship at once revealed her nationality by displaying the British flag. At the same moment a cloud of smoke appeared at the side of the king's frigate, and, before the boom was heard, a cannon ball, skipping from billow to billow, sank a few fathoms from the *Indienne*.

"Beat to quarters, Mr. Walters," shouted the captain, "for you see that we were right. Stand by my lads," he continued, addressing the crew, "three cheers for America, and down with England."

A general hurrah responded, which had not ceased before they heard the charge beaten on board the *Drake*, which was the name of the vessel in view; the drums of the *Indienne* made answer instantly, and everyone not there already ran to his place; the gunners to their pieces, the officers to their batteries, and the sailors who were to work the ship, to their stations. The captain immediately climbed upon the hatch over the companion-ladder of the quarter-deck, holding his speaking-trumpet, that symbol of supreme rank, the sceptre of the nautical kingdom, usually carried by the commander in time of storm and conflict.

The parts were changed, for it was the Englishman who showed impatience, and the American frigate which affected calmness. Hardly were the vessels within range than a stripe of smoke appeared all along the *Drake*, and a detonation, like a rolling of thunder, was heard, while the iron messengers, sent to bestow death on the revolutionists, but, in their impetuosity, miscalculating the distance, fell spent against the frigate's side. As if declining to answer a premature attack, the latter continued to hug the wind in a way to spare the enemy as much distance to traverse as possible.

At this juncture the captain turned to cast a final glance over his ship, and his astounded gaze rested upon a new character who had selected this dread and terrible instant to step upon the stage.

This was a man barely of twenty-two or three, with pale and gentle face and simple yet elegant bearing. The captain did not know he had him on board. He leaned against the mizenmast with his arms folded on his

breast, eyeing the English vessel with melancholy indifference as it rushed down under all sail. This tranquillity at such a moment in a man who appeared strange to warfare, struck the captain; he remembered the prisoner announced by the Count d'Auray, and brought on board during the last night at the moorings of Port Louis.

"Who allowed you to come upon deck, monsieur?" he demanded, as well as he could, softening the tone of his voice so that it was difficult to tell whether his speech was a question or a reproach.

"Nobody, monsieur," rejoined the state prisoner in a sweet, sad voice; "but I hoped that under such circumstances you would perhaps less strictly observe the orders which made me your prisoner."

"Have you forgotten that you are forbidden to enter into communication with the ship's company?"

"I am not doing so, captain; I came to see if there is no bullet cast for me."

"If you stay where you are, you will soon find what you are looking for, monsieur. So believe me, remain below decks."

"Is that advice or an order, captain?"

"I leave you free to take it as you please."

"In that case, thanking you, I shall remain," replied the young gentleman.

At this instant, a new detonation was heard; but by this, the two vessels were so near that it was scarcely three-quarters of the range, and the hailstorm of iron rushed wholly through the rigging of the *Indienne.* Two splinters of wood of little importance fell out of the masts and the muffled scream and moan were heard of several men. At this time, the captain had his eyes fastened upon the prisoner; a ball passed within two feet above his head, lodging itself in the mast against which he leaned, but, spite of this warning of death, he remained in the same calm and tranquil attitude as if he had not felt the wing of the exterminating angel skim his brow. The captain was a judge of courage; this test sufficed to let him gauge the man under his eyes.

"Very well, monsieur," he said, "stay where you are, and when we come to close quarters, if you are tired of idling with folded arms, snatch up a sword or axe and bear us a hand. Excuse me now from farther busying myself about you, for I have other matters to do. Fire!" he roared through his speaking trumpet down the main hatchway, "fire!"

"Fire!" replied as an echo the transmitting officer to whom the orders had been addressed.

Then the *Indienne* shook from her false keel to the sky-topmast, a frightful report was audible and a cloud of smoke spread like a sail bellying out on the leeward side, and faded away before the wind. Standing on the quarter-deck, the captain impatiently waited for it to disappear to value the effect of the broadside on the enemy. When

his gaze could plunge through the vapour, he made out that the maintopmast had fallen, encumbering the *Drake's* stern, and all her sails were riddled on the mainmast.

"Well done, my hearties!" he shouted. "Now, be sharp and wear ship. They are too busy clearing away their tatters to give us a raking broadside. Fire as the guns come to bear, and shave under the skin this time!"

The sailors hastened to execute the order. The ship answered her helm with gracefulness, and completed the manœuvre, as the commander had foreseen, without being prevented by the enemy. Then, again the frigate trembled like a volcano, and, like it, too, belched both flame and smoke.

This time the men at the guns had taken the order literally, and the broadside went entirely into the lower masts. The shrouds, stays, and halyards were cut. The two masts still stood, but on all sides around them fluttered the rags of canvas. Some more considerable damage had been done the foe than could be judged at that distance, for his broadside was delayed, and, instead of raking the *Indienne*, caught her slanting. It was only the more terrible, as it went wholly into the deck and side, and struck both wooden walls and their defenders; but, by a chance which seemed to belong to magic, it had spared all three masts. Only a few ropes were severed, an unimportant accident, which allowed the vessel to be master of movements. One glance was sufficient for Paul Jones to learn that he had only lost men, and that the destruction had visited more flesh than timber. He leaped with joy, and again put his trumpet to his lips.

"Port your helm!" he thundered, "and board her by the starboard quarter. Stand by, you boarders! A last broadside to raze her like a pontoon, and then we can scale the fortress."

At the first change of course made by the *Indienne*, the Englishman comprehended her intention, and endeavoured to neutralize it by a similar manœuvre; but, as the attempt was commenced, a frightful cracking was heard, and the mainmast, cut half through by the American's last discharge, shook for a space like an uprooted tree, and pitched forward, covering the deck with its mainsail and its rigging. Captain Paul thereby understood why the broadside had been delayed.

"Now, she is ours as if she were offered us for nothing," said he, "and you have only to go and take her. A last discharge, at pistol shot, and we'll board her!"

The *Indienne* obeyed like a trained steed, and sped, without opposition, towards her enemy, whose only resource lay henceforth in a hand-to-hand fight, for, unable to manœuvre, her guns were useless. So the *Drake* found herself at the mercy of her adversary, who, by keeping off, might have riddled her until she sank in the sea; but, disdaining that kind of victory, she sent her a last broadside at fifty paces. Before

seeing its effect, and rushing into collision with her, the American frigate entangled her yards in the yards of her enemy, and threw her grappling irons.

Instantly the tops and gangways of the *Indienne* burst into flame like a tree of fire on an illumination day, and the burning hand-grenades rained down on the *Drake* as rapid and heavy as hail. Everywhere the booming of great guns was succeeded by the rattle of the fusillade, and amid the infernal uproar was heard a voice, as of a supernatural being, yelling :—

"Stand to it, lads, stand to it! lash our bowsprit to the portholes of her quarter-deck! well done! lash her to the boom like a rogue to the whipping-post! Fire, now, those bow carronades in reserve."

All his orders were executed as by magic : the two ships were bound together as by iron bands; the two guns on the forecastle deck, not yet fired, growled in their turn, sweeping the enemy's deck with a whole volley of grapeshot and langridge, while a final shout arose in a terrifying voice :

"Boarders, away !"

Joining the action to the word, the captain of the *Indienne* flung down his trumpet, henceforth useless, covered his head with the boarding-cap, buckled the straps under his chin, took the curved sword between his teeth from having carried it in his sash, and ran on the bowsprit to leap from there upon the English deck.

Nevertheless, although his movement had followed his order with the same rapidity as the thunder follows the lightning's flash, he was only the second to alight on the hostile deck : the first to arrive was the young prisoner of state, who had stripped to his shirtsleeves and, armed with only a hatchet, raced before all the others to death or victory.

"You are not aware of the discipline on my craft, monsieur," said Paul, laughing; "I ought to be first to set foot on the vessels I board. I overlook it this time, but do not let it occur again."

At the same instant, along the bowsprit, over the bulwarks, from the yardarms, by the grapnel ropes, by all the rigging which could be used as bridges, the sailors of the rebel cruiser fell on the other deck like ripe fruit from a tree when the wind shakes it. Thereupon the English, who had retreated to the forecastle, unmasked a carronade which they had had time to cut loose and turn round. A spout of flame and iron passed through the assailants. A fourth of the *Indienne's* crew lay mutilated on the hostile planks, amid shrieks and curses. But louder than the blasphemy and outcry, one voice resounded :

"Every living soul onwards!"

There was a scene of awful confusion, a hand-to-hand fight, a general duel. To the cannonade, crackling of the petards and explosion of hand-grenades, succeeded the cold steel, a surer and more silent weapon, particularly in mariners' hands who have reserved for themselves in such struggles that heirloom of giants prohibited on our battlefield

since long ago. With hatchets, skulls were split; with cutlasses, shoulders were laid open; and with long pikes men were pinned to the stumps of the masts. From time to time, amid the mute carnage, a pistol shot would be heard, but isolated, and as if ashamed to mingle with such butchery. This lasted a quarter of an hour, with a confusion which makes it impossible to describe; then, down came the English flag, and the beaten sailors precipitated themselves into the hold by the hatchway so that none were left on the deck but the victors and the dead and wounded, in the midst of whom stood the captain of the *Indienne*, surrounded by his crew, with one foot on the chest of the enemy's commander. He had Lieutenant Walters on his right and the young prisoner on his left, whose blood-stained shirt showed the part he had taken in the victory.

"All is over now," said Paul, stretching out his hand, "and any man who strikes another blow must fight it out with me!" Giving his hand to his prisoner, he added, "Tell me your story to-night, will you? for there is some foul play hidden in it. Only the infamous should be transported to Cayenne, and you cannot be one of them, being so brave!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE UNEXPECTED GUEST.

SIX months after the events recorded, in the opening days of Spring, 1778, a post-chaise with muddy and dust-covered wheels and boot, which bore witness to the length of the road it had come, lumbered slowly along the way from Vannes to Auray, though drawn by two stout horses. The traveller within, who was roughly shaken by the ruts of a country-side road, was our former acquaintance, the young Count d'Auray, whom we saw on the pier of Port Louis. He was coming from Paris in hot haste to revisit the old home of his family, upon which the time has come to furnish precise and circumstantial particulars.

Count Emmanuel d'Auray belonged to one of the oldest houses of Brittany. One of his ancestors had followed St. Louis into the Holy Land, and since that period the name which he was the last to bear had constantly figured in the history of the French monarchy in its victories and its defeats.

His father, the Marquis d'Auray, Knight of St. Louis, Commander in the Order of St. Michael, and Grand Cross of the Holy Ghost, enjoyed, in the court of King Louis XV., where he occupied the grade of *mestre-de-camp*, the high position to which he was entitled by birth, fortune, and personal deserts. This position was still heightened in influence by his alliance with Mademoiselle de Sablé, who fell below him not an iota as regarded family and credit, so that a brilliant career was open to the ambition of the young couple, when—after five years of wedded bliss—the story got about that the Marquis d'Auray had gone mad during a journey on his estate. This news was long discredited, but winter came without him or his wife reappearing at Versailles. For still a year his office remained vacant, as the king, always hoping he would recover his reason, refused to dispose of it. But a second winter passed without even the marchioness returning to make her reverence to the queen. The court quickly forgets: absence is a malady of languor to which the grandest names succumb in a period more or less long. The shroud of indifference gradually spread over this family, shut up in its old *château* as in a tomb, whence none heard its voice soliciting or complaining. The genealogists alone had registered the birth of a son and of a daughter; no other child was born of the union; the d'Aurays, therefore, continued to figure by name in the peerage but for twenty years—not having

mingled in alcove intrigues or political matters, not taking part for either La Pompadour or La Dubarry, not sharing in the victories of the Marshal de Broglie or the defeats of Count de Clermont, in short, having made neither sound nor echo, they had personally been totally forgotten.

Nevertheless, the old name of the Lords of Auray had been uttered twice at court, but without any loud alarum. The first time was when the youthful Count Emmanuel was received, in 1769, among the pages of King Louis XV.; the second when, leaving that company, he entered the musketeers of the young sovereign Louis XVI. He made the acquaintance of a Baron de Lectoure, a kinsman of Prime Minister de Maurepas, which cousin wished d'Auray well, and enjoyed a rather strong influence over the minister. Emmanuel had been presented to the old courtier, who, learning that Count d'Auray had a sister, let a hint fall one day on the possibility of a union between the two families.

Young and full of ambition, Emmanuel, weary of yearning behind the veil covering his name, saw in this marriage a means of resuming the position at court occupied by his father under the late monarch, and he seized the first overture with eagerness. For his part, Baron de Lectoure, under the protest of tightening by brotherhood the ties already uniting him to the young nobleman, made his suit all the more flattering to Emmanuel from his never having seen the lady whose hand he desired.

On her side the Marchioness d'Auray had joyfully adopted the project which reopened the way to favour, so that the marriage was settled between the two families, if not between the persons concerned, and Emmanuel preceding the intended by only three or four days, came to inform his mother that all was terminated according to her wishes.

To the future bride, Marguerite, was merely imparted the settled arrangement without her consent being asked, much as a culprit has the sentence of death read to him.

It was, therefore, lulled by brilliant dreams of his future elevation, and caressing the highest projects of ambition in his brain, that young Count d' Auray re-entered the gloomy home of his family, its feudal towers, black walls, and grass-grown courtyards, forming so vivid a contrast to the golden expectations which he harboured. This *château* was a league and a half from any other dwelling. One of its fronts overlooked that part of the ocean with waves so everlastingly tossed by the storm as to earn the name of the "Wild Sea;" the other extended in an immense park, become quite a forest from having been abandoned to the caprices of vegetation during a score of years.

The rooms had been continually closed, with the exception of those used by the family, and their furniture, renovated in the reign of Louis XIV., had

presented, thanks to the cares of a numerous household, a rich and aristocratic aspect which was fading from the modern fittings, more fashionable, but less grand, due to the hand of Boulle, the court upholsterer.

It was into one of these rooms, with deep mouldings, sculptured mantel-piece, and frescoed ceiling, that Emmanuel entered after alighting from the post-chaise, so eager to acquaint his mother with the happy news he bore that, without taking time to change his dress, he flung on a table his hat, gloves, and travelling pistols, and ordered an old retainer to inform the marchioness of his arrival. He also wanted to know if he should go to her, or wait in his room, for such was the respect for the elders in this old family that the son, after an absence of five months, dared not present himself to his mother without previously consulting her convenience.

As for the Marquis d'Auray, his children hardly remembered having seen him more than two or three times, and then surreptitiously, for it was said that his madness was one such as some persons excited, and they had always been kept away from him with the greatest care. The marchioness alone, being a model of conjugal virtues besides, remained by him, bestowing on the poor invalid the services of a nurse, if not the wife's duties. Hence her name was revered in the villages round about like those saints whose devotedness on earth won them a lot in heaven.

A while after, the footman returned with word that his mistress preferred to come down, and would like the count to await her where he was. Almost instantly the door opened and Emmanuel's mother came in.

She was a woman between forty and forty-five, tall and pale, but still handsome, with a stern, calm and sad countenance, wearing a marked expression of power, command, and haughtiness. She wore the widow's costume adopted in 1769, for she had never left off mourning since the period when her husband went mad. Those long black vestments gave her cold, slow, ghostly step a solemnity which spread over all around this singular lady a fearsome feeling, never overcome even by filial affection in her offspring.

It followed that, at sight, Emmanuel started as at an unexpected apparition, and, instantly rising, took three steps towards her, knelt on one knee, and bowed to kiss the hand offered to him.

"Rise," said the marchioness, "I am glad to see you again."

She uttered the speech in a voice as little sounding of emotion as though her son, half a year absent, had left her only an eve. Emmanuel obeyed, led his mother to a large armchair, in which she sat, and stood before her.

"I received your letter, count," she went on, "and I compliment you on your ability. You appear to me born rather for diplomacy than warfare, and you should induce the Baron de Lectoure to

solicit an embassy for you in preference to a regiment."

"Lectoure is ready to ask for whatever we desire, madame, and, what is more important, he can obtain whatever we desire, so great is his sway over the premier, and so deep his love for my sister."

"In love with a woman he has never seen?"

"Lectoure is a gentleman of sense, mother, and the portrait I drew of Marguerite, perhaps also the information he has collected about our fortunes has inspired the keenest desire in him to become your son and style me his brother. It follows that he has insisted on all the preliminary ceremonies being pressed on in his absence. You ordered the publication of the banns, madame?"

"I did."

"So we can sign the marriage contract on the day after to-morrow?"

"With Heaven's help all will be ready."

"I thank you, mother."

"But tell me," proceeded the lady, leaning on the arm of the chair towards her son, "did he put no questions to you about the young gentleman for whose transportation he obtained an order from the prime minister?"

"None, mother. Such services are asked for without explanation and rendered with confidence, and it is understood between men of good breeding that they should be forgotten as soon as done."

"So he knows nothing?"

"No; but did he know all——"

"What then?" asked the lady.

"Well, madam, I account him to be a good enough philosopher not to let the discovery in any way influence his determination."

"I suspected it—he is impoverished," answered the patrician as if speaking to herself, and with inexpressible contempt.

"Even if that were so, I trust your resolution remains the same?" queried Emmanuel.

"Are we not rich enough to renew his fortune if he revives our position?"

"Then my sister——"

"Do you doubt her obeying when I order?"

"Do you believe she has forgotten Lusignan?"

"During six months, at any rate, she has not dared to refer to him, to me."

"Bear in mind, mother," continued the count, "this marriage is the only way to raise our family once more; for I must not conceal one fact from you: to wit, my father, ailing these fifteen years, and all that time absent from the court, was completely forgotten by the old king at his death, and by the young king on his accession to the throne. Your most virtuous attentions for the marquis have not allowed you to quit him for a moment since he was deprived of reason; your virtues are those Heaven sees and recompenses, but society ignores; and, while in this old house indiscoverable in the heart of Brittany, you are fulfilling the holy mission of consolation which you term a duty in your austerity, your old friends disappear, dead

or in oblivion. The sum is—hard to speak when our family has been six hundred years a glory!—that when I went again to court, our name—the family name of Auray—was not known to their Majesties but as an historical recollection."

"Yes, I know the memory of monarchs is short," muttered the marchioness, but, almost instantly, as if in self-reproach for her irreverence, she continued: "I hope the blessing of the King of Kings will ever be poured on their Majesties and the realm."

"Why, what could do any harm to their happiness?" queried the other, with that thorough confidence in the future which was one of the characteristics of its flighty and reckless nobility. "Louis XVI.—young and good—Marie Antoinette—young and fair—both are beloved by a brave and loyal people. Thank Heaven! fate has placed them beyond the touch of any misfortune."

"My son," returned the old lady, shaking her head; "believe me, nobody is set above human weakness and error. No heart—however much it may believe it is master of itself and steady—is shielded from passions. And no head, even if crowned, can answer for not going white in a single night. You say the people are brave and loyal?"

She rose slowly, went over to the casement, and, solemnly holding out her hand towards the open sea, added:—

"Behold the ocean! it is smooth and peaceful, and yet to-morrow, this night—nay, in one hour, perchance, the blast of the hurricane would bring us the shrieks of distress from the wretches whom it engulfs. Though I dwell afar from society, strange news reaches my ear at times, borne as by invisible and prophetic spirits. Does there not exist a philosophical sect which has entangled several men of rank with its errors? Is not a whole world spoken of which is detached from the mother country, with children who refuse to acknowledge their sires? Is there not a people of subjects who entitle themselves a nation? Have I not heard mention of noblemen crossing the Atlantic to offer to rebels the swords which their ancestors had the habit of drawing solely at the voice of their lawful sovereign? Is it not, moreover, said—or, is it a vision of my solitude?—that King Louis and the queen herself, forgetting that sovereigns are a family of brothers, authorized these armed migrations, and issued letters of marque to some pirate or other?"

"All this is true," said the hearer, astonished.

"Then, may heaven watch over their Majesties the King and Queen of France!" replied the marchioness, slowly retiring, and leaving her son so stupefied by this mournful prevision as to see her go out without speaking one word to stay her, or making a gesture to the same effect.

At first, he remained serious and thoughtful, so to speak, enveloped by the shadow cast by his mother's mourning; but soon his careless mood regained the upper hand, and, as though to

change ideas by changing the horizon, he left the window looking on the sea, and went to lean on the sill of that opening on the country, showing the level land extending from Auray to Vannes.

He had hardly been a few minutes there before he perceived two horsemen on the same road by which he had come, and they appeared to be making for the house. On account of the distance he could not yet form an opinion about them, but, as they drew nearer, he could distinguish master and man.

The former was dressed like the dandies of the period, in a small green gold-frogged riding-coat, white knit tights, and top-boots ; he wore a round hat with a broad band, and his hair was tied with a knot of streamers. He bestrode an English horse of the greatest beauty and highest price, governing it with the grace of a man who had made a profound study of equitation. He was followed at the regulated interval, by a groom whose aristocratic livery was in perfect harmony with the lordly air of his master.

For a space, on seeing that they were so directly proceeding to his house, Emmanuel believed it was the Baron de Lectoure who, having advanced the hour for his journey, came to rejoin him before he had his riding-boots off ; but ere long he recognised his error. Though it seemed to him that this was not the first time he had seen the cavalier, it was impossible for him to recall in what place and under what circumstances he had met him. Whilst he was seeking in his memory to what event of his life the dim recollection of this man was attached, the new arrivals disappeared around the corner of a wall.

Five minutes ensuing, Emmanuel heard the clatter of their horses' hoofs in the yard, and almost immediately the door opened and a servant announced :

" Captain Paul ! "

CHAPTER V.

HUSH-MONEY.

THE name as well as the appearance of the visitor revived in the hearer's memory a confused remembrance to which he could not yet put date or event. The gentleman, who had followed the servant, appeared in the doorway opposite that by which the marchioness had gone out. Although the time was inopportune for a visit, and the young noble, involved in future projects, would have preferred maturing them in his brain to locking them up in his bosom, he was compelled by the obligations of etiquette, so strict at that age between members of society, to receive the new-comer, whose manners, besides, beseemed a person of standing, with special courtesy. After the usual salutations, the host motioned the other to take the armchair; which he did after a bow, whereupon the dialogue began with a common-place of politeness.

"I am delighted to meet you again, my lord," said the new-comer.

"Chance has favoured me, monsieur," said Emmanuel, "for you would not have found me here an hour sooner: I have just arrived from Paris."

"I know it, my lord, for we have been travelling the same road. I left an hour after you, and all along had news of you from the post-boys who had the honour to drive your lordship."

"May I know," replied Emmanuel, with a tone through which began to pierce some discontent, "to what circumstance I owe the interest you appear to take in me personally?"

"It is a natural interest between old acquaintances, and it may be I who have a right to complain of its not being reciprocal."

"Sooth to say, I do think I have already met you somewhere, yet my memory but hazily assists me. Be kind enough to help it."

"If what you say be true, my lord, your memory is rather fugitive, for this is the third time in six months that I have had the honour to exchange compliments with you."

"Though I expose myself to a fresh reproach, I am forced to own that I remain in the same indecision as regards you. Pray be good enough to clear up the time by dates or occurrences, and remind me under what circumstances I had the honour to see you for the first time."

"It was upon the strand of Port Louis where the honour befell me. You were wishful for information about a frigate which I was happily in a position to

supply. I am even under the impression that I accompanied you on board her. Then I wore the dress of a naval ensign, and you that of a royal musketeer."

"Indeed, I remember that, and that I was obliged to leave the vessel without offering you the thanks due to you."

"You are under an error, my lord, for I received your thanks at the second interview."

"Where was that?"

"On board the same vessel whither I conducted you, in the cabin. Then I wore the uniform of a naval captain; blue coat and red waistcoat and breeches, grey stockings and hair in a cue. But the captain would appear thirty years older than the cadet, intentionally aged, for you might not have entrusted to a young man a secret of the importance of that you communicated to me."

"What you report to me is incredible, captain, and yet something tells me it is the fact. Yes, yes, I remember eyes like yours shining in the shade in which you kept yourself concealed. I have not forgotten them. But that time is still one before the last when I had the honour to see you. Continue to aid my memory, I entreat, for I do not recall the final occasion."

"That was, my lord, a week ago, in Paris—at an assault-of-arms, in the rue Chantereine, at St. George's. You surely recollect an English gentleman with red hair of a glorious hue which powder scarcely dulled, a flaming coat and tight continuations? I even had the honour to cross steel with your lordship, and the pleasure of making three palpable hits on you, while you did not have the luck to touch me once. My name then was Jones."

"How strange! they are the same eyes, but it could not be the same man."

"The eyes are the only things about a man that cannot be disguised," replied Captain Paul Jones, "which comes from a spark of heavenly light being in the orb. In any case, that cadet, that captain and that Englishman —they were all one, and that one, I."

"Pray what are you at present? a question not at all out of place to a man so perfect at disguises."

"You see what I am now, for I have no motive to dissemble. I come to you in the plain and unstudied attire of a gentleman who makes calls to the country neighbour. I am what you please to call me—French, English, or American. In which language would you like me to carry on the conversation?"

"Though those languages are as familiar to me as to yourself, I prefer the French; it is the one for brief and concise explanations."

"Have it so, my lord," replied Captain Jones with a profound expression of melancholy. "It is the tongue I prefer. I saw the day on French ground, and the sun of France was the first to rejoice my sight. Though I have often seen more fertile lands, and a brighter sun, there has never been other sun and land for me."

"Your national enthusiasm,"

interrupted Emmanuel, with irony, "makes you overlook the subject to which I owe the honour of your visit."

"You are right, and I return to it, my lord. Six months ago, then, you were strolling along the strand at Port Louis, when you spied, in the outer haven, a narrow-waisted frigate, with rakish upper gear, and you said to yourself,—'The skipper of that craft must have motives known only to himself, to carry such a press of canvas over so little wood.' Whence was engendered in your brain the notion that I was a rover, a pirate, a corsair—something of that sort."

"Was I mistaken?"

"I believe I have hitherto expressed my admiration," replied Paul Jones, with a slightly mocking accent, "for the perspicacity with which your lordship penetrates men and things to the bottom at the first glance."

"A truce to compliments—to the point."

"Under that persuasion, you induced an ensign of our acquaintance to take you on board, and you found in the cabin a captain we also know. You were bearer of a letter from the minister of the navy, ordering all officers on a long cruise, under the French flag, for the Gulf of Mexico, to convey to Cayenne one Lusignan, guilty of an offence against the State."

"That is true."

"I obeyed that order, unaware then that the guilty monster under banishment had committed no other crime than winning your sister's affection."

"Monsieur," ejaculated Emmanuel, springing to his feet.

"These are handsome pistols," negligently continued Captain Jones, playing with the firearms which the Count d'Auray had laid on the table on coming from the carriage.

"And loaded," added Emmanuel, in a tone which there was no mistaking.

"Do they carry true?" went on the captain with affected indifference.

"That is a question which you are free to decide yourself," rejoined Emmanuel, "if you will take a stroll in the ground with me."

"Going out is useless, my lord," said the other, without seeming to understand the proposition in the provocative sense given it. "Yonder is a mark in range and capitally placed."

On these words the captain cocked a pistol and pointed it out of the open window towards a small tree-top. A goldfinch was balancing itself on the highest branch, warbling a joyful and piercing song; the shot went off and the poor bird, cut in two, fell at the foot of the tree. The marksman coolly laid the pistol on the table.

"You are right, my lord," he said, "they are good weapons, and I advise you not to dispose of them."

"You have given me an odd proof of it," remarked the nobleman, "and I am forced to admit that you have a steady hand."

"It comes as a matter of course," returned Captain Jones, with the mournful tone peculiar to him. "In the long days of

calm, when no breath of wind ruffles the looking-glass of the angels which men call the sea, we seamen are forced to seek amusement in what comes to us from off shore. Then we exercise our skill on the gulls which lazily float on the crests of the billows, or the osprey rushing down from the skies to catch the imprudent fishes rising to the surface, and the swallows, wearied by a long flight, which perch on the ends of our yard-arms. Thus we attain some success in the sports which at first blush seem so strange to our profession."

"Proceed, monsieur, but, if the matter be possible, turn to our subject."

"This Lusignan is a good, honourable young man! He told me his story: how, the son of your father's old friend, who died penniless, he had been adopted by him a year or two before the unknown accident which deprived him of reason; how, educated with you, from the outset he inspired hatred in you and affection in your sister. He told me of the long boyhood developed in the same loneliness, and how he and your sister did not perceive their isolation in the world until they were no longer together! He related to me all the details of their juvenile courtship, and how one day Marguerite had spoken to him the words of the young Veronese: 'I shall be thine or the grave's.'"

"She has only too well kept her pledge."

"So it is, eh? Do highborn souls call it shameful and dishonourable when a girl, beguiled by her innocence itself, falls in love? Your mother's duties led her away from the daughter and kept her by her husband, for, you see, I know your mother's virtues as I know your sister's weakness. Your mother is a severe woman. It was she who one day walked into the glade where the lovers met, and coldly grasping her daughter by the hand, led her away, or rather bore her thence, for poor Marguerite had not uttered an outcry or made remonstrance—she swooned on beholding her mother. Then your ruffians, gamekeepers or foresters, poachers who are merely thieves turned thieftakers, fell on the young man and made him a prisoner. You hastened to make the private prisoner a prisoner of state. Was it not so, my lord? Am I not well informed, and is not this dreadful tale exact?"

"No detail is unknown to you, I must avow," replied Emmanuel, confounded.

"These details," resumed Paul Jones, opening a portfolio, "are laid down in these letters of your sister, which, at the time of Lusignan taking the place you made for him by reason of your influence at court, among thieves and murderers, he handed to me to be returned to the writer."

"Give me them!" exclaimed Emmanuel, holding out his hand towards the portfolio, "and they shall be faithfully restored to her who had the rashness——"

"To complain to the only person in the world who loved her," interrupted the captain, drawing to him the letters and

the case. "Rash girl, who let her heart stoop beneath her rank! Rash girl, whose mother was set against her and who found no support in her brother against her tyranny! So she compromised her noble name by signing it to the letters—such as a woman of any other class might be proud of, but which, in the stupid and prejudiced eyes of her society, dishonour—do you say?—her family."

"Since you so well know the terrible reach of these papers," replied the count, reddening with impatience, "accomplish the mission with which you are charged, by remitting them to me, or my mother, or my sister."

"Such was my intention on landing at L'Orient; but on going into a church ten or twelve days ago——"

"You in a church?"

"Yes, my lord."

"What for?"

"To pray."

"Paul the Pirate believes in Heaven?"

"If I did not so believe, my lord, what should I appeal to in the storm?"

"Well, in this church?"

"I heard a priest announce the approaching marriage of the noble Lady Marguerite d'Auray to the high and mighty lord the Baron de Lectoure. I inquired at once about you, and learnt that you were in Paris, where I was forced to go to give the king an account of my cruise."

"The king?"

"Yes, my lord, to King Louis XVI., to his Majesty himself. I went, promising myself to return as speedily as you. I encountered you at St. George's. I heard of your early departure, and timed my own by yours, so that we should arrive here at about the same hour, and—here I am! with quite a different mind than I formed three weeks ago when I reached the coast of Brittany."

"What is this new resolution? Come, come, we must finish!"

"Well, I concluded that, since everybody forgets the poor lover, I was bound to bear him in mind. In your lordship's position, and with your willingness to ally yourself to the Baron de Lectoure, who, you think, is the only person who can realize your ambitious projects, are not these letters worth, say, a hundred thousand francs? a very thin slice out of the two hundred thousand a year composing your fortune."

"But what proves to me that the hundred thousand——"

"You are right, my lord. Hence, it is in exchange for a settlement of that sum in the name of Anatole de Lusignan that I should hand over the letters."

"Would that be all?"

"I still must ask the freedom of the prisoner, whom I shall start with his new revenue in the boundless tracts of Louisiana with a well-chosen plantation, far from the woman who betrayed him, and the family which knew his worth, yet repulsed him."

"It is well, monsieur. Had I known that you came here for such a paltry sum, and such a slender aim, I should not have

been so uneasy. Still, allow me to confer with my mother."

A servant opened the door.

"I am not in for anybody. Leave me!" cried the count, impatiently.

"Mademoiselle d'Auray asks to see my lord."

"Let her come later."

"It is this very instant that she wishes——"

"Do not let me be in the way," interrupted Captain Jones.

"Why, my sister must not see you, monsieur. You must understand that my sister ought not to see you."

"Quite so; but as it is also important that I should not quit the house without terminating the affair which brings me, allow me to step aside into this cabinet."

"Very good," said Emmanuel, himself opening the door. "But pray hasten!"

Captain Jones entered the closet. The other sharply closed the door upon him, and that was hardly done before Marguerite came in.

CHAPTER VI.

UNDYING LOVE.

MARGUERITE D'AURAY, whose life has been told us in the conversation of the count and the captain, was one of those frail, pallid beauties whose whole persons are impressed with the aristocratic seal of their birth. The first glance divined all there was of "blood" in the yielding suppleness of her figure, the dull whiteness of her skin, and in the shape of her spun-out fingers with transparent rosy nails. It was evident that her feet, so small that the pair might have been held in an ordinary woman's footprint, had never walked but on a drawing-room carpet or a flowery lawn. In her tread, graceful though it was, some pride and haughtiness appeared, recalling the family traditions. In short, it was perceptible that her spirit, capable of any sacrifice, might turn rebellious to all tyranny imposed on her; that devotedness in her heart was an instinctive virtue, whilst obedience was but a duty from education; so that the stormy blast which blew upon her bent her like the lily and not like a reed.

Notwithstanding this, when she crossed the threshold, her features offered the expression of such complete discouragement, her cheeks had preserved the traces of such scalding tears, and her whole frame bent under the weight of so hopeless a woe that Emmanuel saw that she had to collect all her forces to wear an appearance of calmness. On perceiving him, she made an effort over herself, and a visible reaction took place; it was consequently with some nervous firmness that she went over to the armchair in which he was seated. Seeing that her brother's face retained the testy look assumed when he was interrupted, she stopped. The two children of the same mother, to whom society had not yet given equal rights, looked like strangers at one another, one with ambitious eyes—the other's fear-filled. Marguerite, however, gradually recovered courage.

"Come at last, Emmanuel," she said; "I was expecting your return as the blind longs for the light. And yet, by the manner in which you receive your sister, it is easy to see that she cannot rely on you."

"If my sister had again become what she ought always to have been," replied Emmanuel, "I mean, a respectful and submissive girl, she would have comprehended, during my absence, what her rank and position exact from her, she would have forgotten past events like those never happening, and, conse-

quently, she would not remember, and she would be prepared for the new future opening before her. Had she thus presented herself to me, my arms would have been open to her, and my sister been sister still."

"Mark well my words," responded Marguerite, "and take them, above all, as a justification for myself, and not as a reproach to others. Heaven preserve me from accusing my mother—for sacred duties keep her apart from us—but if my mother had been like other mothers to me, I should have opened my heart constantly to her, like a book. At the first words writ there by a strange hand she would have been forewarned of the danger, and I would have fled from it. If I had been brought up in society, instead of growing like a wild flower in the shade of this old castle, I should have known from my infancy all about that rank and station of which you remind me at present, and I should not probably have stepped over the trammels they prescribe and the duties they impose. Lastly, if I had been thrown into the midst of those belles with frivolous hearts and affected wit, whom I have often heard you vaunt, but who are not known by me, if then I had committed only fashionable faults, I could forget the past, sow on the surface fresh thoughts, as flowers are planted on a grave, and, uncaring where they sprang, I might make of those flowers a bouquet for a ball and a wreath for the bridal. Unfortunately, things are not so, Emmanuel. I was bid beware when there was no longer time to avoid the danger. My rank and station were recalled to me when I had descended from them, and my heart was asked to turn towards future joys when it was plunged in the tears of the past."

"What is the conclusion of all this?" queried Emmanuel, bitterly.

"That you alone, Emmanuel, can make your sister loyal, if not happy. I have no resource in my father. Alas! I do not even know if he could recognise his daughter. I have no hope in my mother—her gaze alone freezes me, and her speech makes me feel like dying. To you alone I am forced to come, and to you I must say, 'Brother, you are the head of the house, and to you each of us must render an account of our doings, I fell in love with a man beneath me, all through ignorance, and I have been punished for that as if it were a crime. Is this not enough?"

"Go on, go on," muttered the other, impatiently. "Come, what do you want?"

"Since union with the man whom only I would wed is deemed impossible, I ask for the punishment to be proportioned to my power to bear. Heaven forgive my mother for having parted me from my beloved as if she had never loved and wed! and favoured the consignment of him to oblivion and obscurity, torture and degradation. You were even more cruel to him; because it did not become any man for such a cause to behave, not merely unmanly, but like a

judge to a criminal. You two united wish to impose upon me a more painful martyrdom than has led sufferers to heaven. Emmanuel, in the name of the babyhood passed in the same cradle, our childhood sheltered by the same roof, our title of brother and sister, which nature gave and we must bear—I claim for the nunnery's door to open and close upon me; within those walls, Emmanuel, I promise you, kneeling each day with my brow upon the stone, weighed down by my fault, to beseech of the All-Merciful nothing as recompense for my tears but reason for my father, happiness for my mother, and honour, glory, and fortune for you. I vow to you this is all I shall pray for."

"Yes, and society will say that I sacrificed my sister to my advancement, and took her inheritance whilst she lived. Go to! you are sick of brain!"

"Listen to me, Emmanuel," implored Marguerite, leaning on the back of the chair nearest her.

"Well?"

"When you give your word, of course, you keep it."

"Being a nobleman, I——'

"Look at this bracelet."

"I see it plainly. What of it?"

"It is fastened by a key. The key is in a ring, and I pledged my word never to consider myself disengaged of my promise until it should be returned to me."

"Who has the key?"

"Thanks to you and my mother, he is too far away to be called back—he is at Cayenne."

"I should not give you so much as two months of wedded bliss," replied the count, with a sneering smile, "before the bracelet would be such a burden to you that you will be the first to cry for a riddance of it."

"I thought I said it was soldered on my arm."

"You know what is done when a key is lost, and one cannot get in at a door, one sends for a locksmith!"

"In my case, Emmanuel," returned Marguerite, raising her voice, and holding out her arm with a firm and solemn gesture, "you must send for the executioner, for this hand will have to be cut off before I give it to another."

"Silence, silence!" cried out Emmanuel, rising and looking with disquietude at the side room door.

"Now, all is spoken," added Marguerite. "I have no hope, save in you, Emmanuel, for you are not a bad man, though you do not understand deep feelings. I come to you in tears—look that I am not lying!—to tell you: Brother, this marriage means misfortune—it is the despair of my life. I prefer the nunnery, misery, death itself! You would not hear me, or, hearing me, you have not comprehended. Now, I shall apply to this suitor, and appeal to his honour and delicacy. If that does not suffice, I shall tell him all—my love plight to another, fault, crime, or pride! I shall tell him I have a beloved who has been removed from me, so that I am even ignorant where he dwells. But he lives; for the

beloved cannot die without a pang rushing to the heart of his adored. In short, I shall tell him that, loving the other, I cannot love him, and never will."

"Tell him it, all!" cried out Emmanuel, irritated at so much persistency, "but the contract will be signed this evening and to-morrow you will be Baroness de Lectoure."

"Then should I be the most unhappy woman in the world," responded Marguerite, "for I should have a brother for whom I would cherish no farther affection, and a husband for whom I would hold no esteem. Farewell, Emmanuel; believe me, that contract will remain unsigned."

With this, Marguerite went forth in a slow and deep despair which could not be mistaken by her expression. Hence Emmanuel, convinced that he had a struggle to sustain and not a victory to bear away, watched her depart with an uneasiness not free from a weakening tendency. At the end of a short silence and quiet, he turned and perceived Captain Jones behind him, completely forgotten. He stood in the closet doorway. Instantly recollecting how necessary under the circumstances was the possession of the papers the privateersman had come to offer, he sat quickly down at a table, took up pen and paper and, turning to him, said,

"Now, captain, we are by ourselves, and nothing stays our getting through our business. In what terms do you wish the agreement set forth? Dictate —I am ready to write."

"It is useless, my lord," was the other's cold reply.

"How so?"

"I have changed my mind."

"What's that?" said the nobleman, rising, alarmed at the consequences of which he caught a glimpse in the rebuff so little anticipated.

"I shall myself give the hundred thousand francs to Lusignan and provide a husband for your sister."

"Who are you, then?" said Emmanuel, taking a stride towards him, "thus to dispose of a young lady who is my sister—whom you have never seen and do not know?"

"Who am I?" retorted Captain Jones, smiling. "On my word, I am no better informed than your lordship, for my birth is a secret not to be revealed to me before I attain my twenty-fifth year."

"When will that be?"

"As it falls this evening, my lord, I remain ready to place all the information you care to ask for at your disposal after to-morrow."

He bowed.

"I let you leave," said the count, "but, you understand, it is on condition of your returning."

"I was going to make the same condition, and thank you for foreseeing it."

He saluted the noble a second time and went out of the room.

At the door of the house the visitor found his man and horse, and they went back on the road to Port Louis. When out of sight of the *château*, the captain alighted and walked to a fisher's cottage built on the beach. At

the door, sitting on a bench, and wearing a seafarer's dress, was a young man so absorbed in his thoughts that he did not hear the captain approach him. He laid his hand on his shoulder. The other started, looked up and turned dreadfully pale, although Paul Jones's open and joyous face indicated that he was far from being the bearer of bad news.

"I have seen her," said he.

"Who?" muttered the young man.

"Marguerite, of course."

"Well?"

"She is a charming girl!"

"I did not ask you that, Heaven knows!"

"She loves you still."

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculated Lusignan, gripping him by the hand and suppressing a sob of grief.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SHELL SOON TO EXPLODE.

ALTHOUGH our readers, from all we have narrated, must have easily understood what happened during the six months in which we lost sight of our hero, several points are still necessary for the full intelligence of the new occurrences.

On the night of the naval action, Lusignan had recited to his befriender the story of his entire life, simple, and little eventful: love had been its principal incident, and, after having been all its delight, it became all its grief. Paul Jones's free and adventurous existence, his position beyond all exigencies, his whim above all laws, his autocratic ways on his own deck—all had inspired him with too fair a feeling for natural right for him to carry out the order given him about Lusignan.

As stated, Paul Jones belonged to the United States Navy, having adopted the colonists' cause with enthusiasm. So he continued his cruise in the Channel, but finding no captures to be made on the ocean, he executed several forays upon the English coast, notably one in attempt to seize the Earl of Selkirk, and convey him to America as a hostage—an attempt which failed from the nobleman being away in town from his country seat.

In these enterprises Lusignan had seconded him with the courage he had displayed in the conflict of the *Indienne* with the *Drake*, so that Captain Jones felicitated himself more than ever on chance having chosen him to baffle injustice.

But it was not enough to save Lusignan from transportation; he ought to be restored to his home, his beloved, and reputation.

This was as easy as the rest for Paul Jones, the famous rebel rover, as having received letters of marque from Louis XVI., he could return to Versailles to give an account of his cruise.

He selected the port of L'Orient, where he cast anchor for the second time, in order to be near the Chateau d'Auray.

The first answer the allies met to their questions was the news of the bridal of Marguerite d' Auray and the Baron de Lectoure. Lusignan believed that he was forgotten, and in his first fit of desperation he would have rushed to see Marguerite, at the risk of falling into his persecutors' hands, if only to reproach her for her faithlessness; but the captain, calmer and less credulous, forced him to promise not to land before he received word from him. Assured that the wedding would not take place for a fortnight, he went to Paris,

where he was received by the king, who gave him a sword with a golden handle, and decorated him with the order of Military Merit. He profited by this kindness to relate Lusignan's adventure to the king, not only obtaining his pardon, but the post of Governor of Guadeloupe as a recompense for his services.

All these doings had not made him lose sight of the Count d'Auray. Informed of his leaving town, the sea-rover followed, and, having called Lusignan to an appointment, he arrived at Auray an hour after its master.

We have seen how he was undeceived as regards Marguerite, and had overheard the dialogue in which she fruitlessly besought her brother to take pity on her and not force her to marry the Baron de Lectoure; and how, on quitting the mansion, he had rejoined Lusignan, where he awaited him by the seashore, notified by a letter written the night before.

The two men stayed together until nightfall.

Thereupon Captain Jones, who had a personal matter to attend to, as he had informed the count, quitted his friend and walked back to Auray. This time he did not enter the residence, but, skirting the walls of its grounds, he proceeded to a gateway giving entry within them, in a plantation of the same domain.

About an hour before Captain Jones left the fisherman's cottage where he had met the lover, another person had preceded him towards the abode where he was going to seek the revelation of his birth. This was the Marchioness d'Auray, the high heiress of the name of Sablé, whom we have once seen in this story, so we can trace her stern, pale face.

She wore the same black garb, but over her forehead she had drawn a long mourning veil, which enveloped her from head to foot. The goal our brave and reckless sea-captain was seeking, with the hesitation of ignorance, was familiar to her. It was a keeper's lodge, situated a few steps from the entrance of the park, and inhabited by an aged man, beside whom the Marchioness d'Auray had been twenty years accomplishing one of those acts of laborious and continuous benevolence, winning her the reputation of rigid sanctity which she enjoyed. These cares for old age were bestowed, it is true, with the same solemn and gloomy visage remarked by us, which never was illumined by the sweet emotions of pity; but still they were performed, every body knew, with an exactness which took the place of the charm and freedom of benevolence through the punctuality of duty.

The lady's features were even more grave than usual as she slowly crossed her grounds to reach the little plot of her old family serving-man's. The door was open as though to coax in the fading rays of the setting sun, so sweet in May and so warming for the aged. It was an empty house, however.

The marchioness walked in, looked around her, and, as if certain that the person she sought would not be tardy in coming, she resolved to wait.

She took a seat, but out of the sunshine, like a mortuary statue, looking most suitable when in the shadow of the damp crypt.

She had been nearly half an hour here without moving, plunged in meditation, when she saw between her and the dying daylight a figure in the doorway; she slowly lifted her eyes and found it was the expected one. Both started as if they met by accident, and yet they were in the habit of daily meeting.

"I have been waiting half an hour for you, Achard," the marchioness first broke the silence. "Where were you?"

"Had your ladyship gone on fifty paces farther I would have been found under the great oak at the skirt of the forest."

"You know that I never go that way," observed the lady, with a visible shuddering.

"In which you are wrong, my lady; there I go to pray for one now in heaven who claims our mutual prayers, and would be astonished, perhaps, if he did not at least hear those of old Achard."

"How do you know but that I offer prayers, too?" queried the lady, with feverish agitation. "Do you fancy that the dead require our kneeling unceasingly on their graves?"

"No," replied the old man, with profound sorrow; "no, I do not believe the dead ask so much, my lady; but I do believe that if any part of us lingers on earth after our death it must thrill at the sound of the footfalls of those we loved during our life."

"But if the love were a guilty one?" remonstrated the marchioness, in a low and hollow voice.

"However guilty," said the old man, lowering his voice to be in unison with the lady's, "do you believe that blood and tears have been shed without expiation? Then the Ruler on high would have been too severe a judge to be an indulgent Father to-day."

"Yes; perhaps He hath forgiven," murmured the marchioness; "but if the world knew what Heaven knows, would it forgive?"

"The world!" repeated the old man, "the world! That's the great word come from your lips at last. The world! that is the phantom to which you sacrificed everything —— love, wifehood, maternity! your own happiness and that of others! The world! it was the fear of the world that clad you in that mourning robe under which you hoped to hide your remorse! You were right, for you have succeeded in deceiving it, and it took your remorse for virtue."

The hearer raised her head with uneasiness and opened the folds of her veil to look at him who used such a strange speech; after an instant's silence, seeing nothing to disturb it on the old man's placid countenance, she said:

"You address me with a sharpness which makes me think that you have some personal grievance with which to reproach me. Have I broken any of my promises? have not those who

serve you under my orders shown you the respect and obedience I enjoined upon them? You know that if there be anything lacking here, you need only speak one word."

"Forgive me, my lady, it was sadness and bitterness — the effect of old age and loneliness. You must yourself know that there are some troubles which cannot be mentioned! the tears will not flow and fall, drop by drop, back on the heart. No, I have nobody to complain of, my lady. Since, through a feeling for which I am grateful without trying to fathom it, you have undertaken to see that I want for nothing, not for a day have you forgotten your engagement; and, like the ancient prophet, sometimes I have seen an angel come as messenger."

"Yes," observed the noble dame, "I know that Marguerite often accompanies the servant charged to wait upon you, and I have seen with pleasure the attentions she shows you and the friendship she entertains for you."

"But I for my part have not failed in my promises, I trust. For twenty years I have dwelt apart from men, alone in this house, so greatly did I fear for your sake the delirium of my wakeful hours and the indiscretion of my nights."

"Certainly, certainly, and fortunately, the secret has been well guarded," said the marchioness, laying her hand on Achard's arm; "but that becomes for me only an additional motive not to lose in one day the fruit of twenty years more sombre, isolated and dreadful than yours!"

"Yes, I understand, more than once you have trembled with the sudden thought that there was a man somewhere in the world who might come one day to require that secret of me —a man whom I could not deny. You shudder now at the bare idea. But be of good cheer! The man was only a boy when he ran away from the school where we were having him brought up, in Scotland, and nothing has been heard of him these ten years. Doomed to obscurity, the child anticipated his destiny. Now he is lost in the vast world without anyone knowing where he is lost, a poor nameless unit among the millions who are born, suffer, and die on the surface of the world! He will have lost his father's letter, he will have mistaken the token by which I was to recognise him, or, better still for you, he may not still exist."

"You are cruel, Achard," said the marchioness, "to say such a thing to a mother. You do not at all know what odd secrets and strange contradictions may be confined in a woman's heart. For, in short, can I be tranquil unless my child be dead? My old friend, does this secret of which he has been ignorant five-and-twenty years, become at the end of that time so necessary that he cannot live without its revelation to him? Believe me, Achard, it will be better for his own sake if he remains in ignorance of it. So far, I am sure that he has been happy. Old man, do not change his exist-

ence; do not put thoughts in his mind which might urge him to an evil action. No, tell him, instead of what you have to say, that his mother has gone to rejoin his father in heaven—please God it come so to pass! but, on dying—for I wish to see him, whatever you say to him—once, if only once, I must press him to my heart! tell him his dying mother entrusted his welfare to the Marchioness d'Auray, in whom he will find a second mother."

"I understand you, my lady," said Achard, smiling. "This is not the first time that you have opened the way where you would like to stray. But you unfold the question more frankly to-day, and, if you dared, or, if you did not know me better—you would offer me some bribe to lead me to betray the last will of him who sleeps so near us."

The hearer moved as if to interrupt him.

"Listen to me, my lady," resumed the old man, holding out his hand, "and let it dwell in your mind as sacred and irrevocable. As faithful as I have been to the promises I made to the Marchioness d'Auray, so shall I be to those made to the Count de Morlaix. On the day when his son—or your son—comes to present me the token of identification and claim his secret, I shall tell it, my lady. As for the papers which confirm it, you know they are not to be handed him until after the death of the Marquis d'Auray. The secret is here," said the old man, laying his hand on his heart. "No human power can force it out before the time — no human power can prevent its coming forth then. There are the papers in that press, of which the key never leaves me, and nought but robbery or murder can deprive me of them."

"But," said the lady, half rising on the arms of the large chair, "you may die before my husband, old man; for, though he is in worse health than you, you are older, and then what would become of your documents?"

"The priest who witnesses my last moments will receive them under the seal of confession."

"Thus will the chain of my fears be prolonged up to my death," said the marchioness, rising, "and the last link will be welded for eternity to my coffin! In the world there is a man—the only one, perchance—who is irremovable as a rock, and Heaven has placed him on my path, not only as remorse, but as vengeance! It will need but one good storm to carry me unto him and shatter me! Old man, you hold my secret in your hands—it is well! Do what you will; you are the master and I the slave! Farewell!"

With these words the stern lady went out on the way home.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NAME OF THE NAMELESS.

"YES," said the old man as he watched his visitor departing, "I know you have a heart of bronze, insensible to any kind of fear save that planted in your soul to replace remorse. But that is enough for you! and it is paying dear for your reputation for virtue to pay the price which makes it your eternal terror. It is true that the fame of the Marchioness d'Auray is so firmly established that if Truth came out of the earth or down from the skies, she would be treated as a libeller! But Heaven wills as it wills, and what passes beneath was long ago inscribed in its book of wisdom."

"Well spoken," broke in a ringing young voice, hailing the religious maxim which the old man's resignation let escape. "On my word, father, you speak like the Preacher himself."

Achard, turning, perceived Captain Jones, who had come up as his visitor went away, so filled with thought at the recent scene as not to perceive the young man. He was approaching on seeing the other alone when he heard the final words on which he commented with his habitual good humour. Astounded by this unexpected comer, Achard looked at him as if to beg him to repeat the observation.

"I say that there is more grandeur in the resignation which submits than in the philosophy which doubts. This is a maxim of our Quakers, which, for my eternal bliss, I would I had less often on my lips and more so in my heart."

"Pardon me, monsieur," said the old man on seeing our adventurer, motionless, with one foot over the threshold, looking at him, "but may I know who you are?"

"For the time being," answered the rover, dropping the leash as usual to his poetic and reckless gaiety, "I am a son of Plato's Republic, having the human species for my brothers, the world for my country, and no possessions but the place on earth which I make for myself."

"What do you seek here?" continued the old man, smiling in spite of himself at the air of jollity spread over the young face.

"I am seeking," responded the sea-captain, "three leagues from L'Orient, and five hundred paces from the Chateau d'Auray, a cottage deucedly resembling this one, in which I expect to find an old gentleman who may easily be yourself."

"What should his name be?"

"Louis Achard."

"I am he."

"Then may the blessing of

Heaven fall on your white hair!" ejaculated the rover, in a voice instantly changing in tone to that of feeling and respect; "for here is a letter which, I believe, comes from my father, and it says you are an honest man."

"Was there no enclosure in the letter?" exclaimed the old man with glittering eyes, taking a step to approach the speaker.

"Yes, there was," replied the latter, showing a Venetian sequin broken in half; "about a moiety of a gold piece, of which you ought to hold the other portion."

Achard mechanically put forth his hand while gazing at him.

"Yes, yes," said he, his eyes filling with tears more and more at every word, "yes, this is as it should be, and, furthermore, the resemblance is extraordinary!" He opened his arms. "Child! Oh, Heaven!"

"What has come over you?" exclaimed Paul, holding out his arms now to sustain the old man, who sank under the burden of his emotion.

"Oh, do you not understand that you are the living image of your father, whom I so loved that I would have given my blood and life for him?—as I will to you, young man, if you ask for them!"

"Then, give us a grip of your hand, my old friend," said Paul, "for, take my word on it, the chain of good feeling was not snapped between the father's grave and the son's cradle. Whoever my sire was—if, to resemble him, there has to be a conscience without reproach, a courage that stands all tests, and a memory which always cherishes gratitude, though it sometimes forgets wrongs—you have hit it: I am his living image, still more in soul than face."

"Yes, your father had all those parts," slowly said the old man, embracing the returning idol, and tenderly eyeing him through his tears, "yes, he had the same pride in the voice, the same fire in the eyes, and the same nobleness in the heart. But why have you not come to me sooner, young man? There have been very darksome hours in my life which your presence would have lighted up."

"Why? this letter bade me to go and find you when I was twenty-five, and I did not reach that age long ago—only an hour."

The old man lowered his head pensively, and kept silence for a moment, engulfed in past memory.

"Already twenty-five," he said, lifting his head at last, "it seems to me as if it were only yesterday that you were born in this house—opened your eyes in that room."

He pointed towards an inner room door.

The captain seemed to meditate in his turn; looking around him to fortify his gaze by the view of the objects which offered him a throng of reminders.

"In this house, in this room," repeated he, "and here I lived till I was five years old."

"Yes," muttered the old man, trembling as if wishful to tear him from the sensations beginning to overwhelm him.

"Let me have my peep into

the past," said Captain Jones, laying his hands over his eyes to concentrate his thoughts, "for I recall a room as if I had seen it in a dream. And is that the one? Hearken! Oh, it is strange how all comes back to me!"

"Speak, boy, speak!"

"If that is the same, there should stand on the right as you go in, at the far end, a bed with hangings—green hangings."

"Yes."

"A clothes press over against the bed, in which there were books, amongst others, a large Bible with German prints."

"This is the one," said the old man, showing the volume open on a praying-desk.

"So it is; it is!" ejaculated Paul, kissing the leaves.

"Good heart, good heart!" muttered the other. "I thank Heaven!"

"Besides," continued the young man, rising, "from a window of that room one can see the sea, and three islands set in it."

"Just so—Houat, Hoedic, and Belle-Ile-en-Mer."

"The same!" cried out Jones, leaping towards the inner room; and seeing that the other would have followed him, he checked him, saying, "Nay, nay; let me go in alone. I want to be alone."

He entered and shut the door after him.

There he paused, struck by the holy respect which surrounds the memories of childhood. The room was just as he described, for the devoted religion of the old man had preserved it pure from any change. No doubt a stranger's gaze would have checked the manifestations of the feeling the rover experienced, but, sure of loneliness, he gave way entirely. Slowly he advanced to where the child used to kneel and pray as they do on the threshold of life for those who opened its gates to them.

What events had succeeded one another between the two acts of reverence repeated at twenty years' interval!—what varied and undreamt-of horizons had replaced that which the merry sun of our youthful years caressed with so soft a beam! How far had the fitful wind which blew in his ship's sails driven him from private passions into the thick of those political!

The heedless young man who believed he had forgotten all that existed on earth, had it all come back to him! his life, free and powerful as the ocean which rocked him, was going to be attached again by hitherto unknown ties which might bind him to this or that spot, like an anchored vessel sighing for the breeze and called for by the breeze, but enchained, a new-made captive whose past liberty made the coming servitude more bitter.

In these feelings he long sank, and when he slowly shook them off, he went to lean on the window-sill.

It was a fair, still night, the shining moon silvered the crests of the waves. The three islands rose on the sky-line, blue as fog banks floating there. He remembered the many times when

he had remained in the same place viewing the same sight, following with his gaze some snowy sail which silently skimmed the waters like a night-bird's wing.

Then his heart overflowed with sweet and tender recollections ; he let his head sink on his bosom, and would have wept.

At that moment he felt his hand taken ; it was the old man. He wanted to conceal his emotion, but instantly repenting his not daring to be a true man, he turned towards him and frankly showed his tear-bathed cheek.

"Been weeping, boy?" said Achard.

"Yes, I was," replied the rover, "why should I hide it? Look at me! Yet I have seen terrible things in my career ; the cyclone spinning my vessel on the white caps of the breakers, or into the trough, and I felt that it weighed no more on the wing of the tempest than a dry leaf on the evening breeze. I have seen men fall around me like the ripe wheat under the reaper's sickle. I have heard the shrieks of death and distress of those with whom I shared the feast on the eve before. To receive their last breath, I had to march through a hail of cannon balls and bullets on a deck where I slipped every step in gore. Yet my spirit remained calm, and my eyes were not moistened. But this room, whose memory I have so sacredly guarded, where I received the first fondlings of a father whom I never more shall see, and the last kisses of a mother who may never again see me—this room is holy as the cradle and as the grave. I cannot greet it without letting loose my emotions, I must weep or be stifled."

"You are right," said the old man, "this room is both cradle and tomb, for you were born there," pointing, "and here you received your father's farewell," he concluded, indicating the parallel angle of the apartment.

"Then he is dead?"

"Dead!"

"Tell me how."

"I will tell you all."

"Wait a moment," said Paul Jones, groping for a chair, and sitting down. "I have not the strength to listen to you now. Let me recover."

He leaned an elbow on the window-ledge, rested his chin on his hand, and gazed again out on the sea.

"What a lovely scene is the moonlit ocean, now!" he mused with the soft, sad tone habitual to him. "It is calm as the smile of heaven, and grand as eternity. I do not believe that a man who has often contemplated this sight, can fear to die. My father died with courage?"

"Certainly he did," spoke up Achard, proudly.

"So it should have been," said Paul Jones. "I can remember my father though I was not four years old when I saw him last."

"He was a handsome young man like you," went on Achard, regarding the sea-captain with sorrow, "and just your age."

"His name?"

"He was the Count de Morlaix."

"Then I, too, come of an old

and noble family. I, too, have coat-of-arms and badge like all those insolent lordlings who asked after my patents of nobility when I showed my wounds."

"Wait, young man, wait, do not let pride sway you, for I have not yet told you the name of her to whom you owe the day, and you are unaware of the dread secret of your birth."

"Be it so! I shall not hear the name of my mother with less respect and gratitude. Her name?"

"The Marchioness d'Auray," slowly and as if regretfully answered the custodian.

"What did you say?" exclaimed the captain, leaping up and grasping his hands.

"The truth," was said with sadness.

"Then Emmanuel is my brother, and Marguerite my sister?"

"Do you know them already?" asked the astonished old servitor.

"You speak true, old man," said the young seaman, falling back in the chair. "Heaven wills what it wills, and all is written long beforehand in its wisdom."

There fell a momentary silence till, raising his head and fixing his resolute eyes on the confidant, Captain Paul said:

"Now, I am ready to hear all. You may speak."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SECRET OF THE SEPULCHRE.

THE old man collected his thoughts and thus began :

"They were betrothed. I do not know what deadly hatred suddenly divided their families and separated them. With a broken heart the Count de Morlaix could not remain in France. He sailed away to San Domingo, where his father possessed a plantation. I went with him, for my lord had all confidence in me; I was the son of his foster-mother and had received the same education as he; he called me 'brother,' and I alone kept in mind the distance nature had set between us. The marquis left the care on me to watch over his son, for I loved him with all a father's affection. Two years we remained under the tropical sky, during which time your father, buried in the solitudes of that magnificent island, a traveller without plans or goal, a hunter ardent and indefatigable, endeavoured to cure the ills of the soul with fatigues of the body. But, far from succeeding, his heart seemed only to enflame the more under that burning sun. At length, after the two years' conflicts and struggles, his senseless love carried him away; he was forced to see her or die! I gave way and we started. There never was a fairer and pleasanter transit; sea and sky smiled on us and made us believe these were happy presages. Six weeks after our departure from Port-au-Prince, we landed at Havre. Mdlle. de Sablé was married; the Marquis d'Auray was at Versailles, fulfilling the duties of his office near King Louis XV., and his wife, too ailing to be with him, had remained in the old Château of Auray, whose turrets you can see from here."

"Yes, yes, I know them," muttered the rover, "it is well. Continue."

"As concerned me," resumed the old man, "during our travels, one of my uncles, an old retainer of the house of Auray, had died and left me this little house and a bit of land about it. I took possession of it. Your father left me at Vannes with the word that he was going to Paris, and I did not see him again for a year, which I spent in this house.

"One night—it is now twenty-five years from that night—there came a knocking at my door. I went and opened it. Your father walked in, carrying a woman whose face was veiled. He placed her upon the couch in the room, and returning to the other where I was awaiting mute and motionless with astonish-

ment, he laid his hand on my shoulder, and looking at me like a man who implores, though he knew he had the right to command, he said :

"'Louis, you can do more than save my life and honour, for you can save those of the woman I love. Mount a horse, ride to the town and bring back a doctor in an hour.'

"He spoke in the curt, powerful voice which denotes there is no time to lose, and I obeyed. Day was peeping when the doctor and I returned, and the Count de Morlaix showed him into that room. At about five in the afternoon the doctor went away, and at nightfall your father came forth with the woman, still veiled, in his arms. In that room I found a child newly born."

"But are you sure that the woman was the Marchioness d'Auray?" queried the visitor, as if he still doubted.

"Oh!" exclaimed the old servant in a manner as dreadful as unexpected. "I offered the Count de Morlaix to keep you in my place, and, accepting, he came time and again to spend an hour by you."

"Alone?" asked Captain Jones anxiously.

"Always alone," responded Achard. "Yet I had leave to stroll in the park with you, where it often happened that the marchioness would appear at the end of some walk as though chance had brought her there. She would beckon you to her and caress you like a stranger's child whom it was a pleasure to see because it was pretty. So passed four years. Then, one night, knocking came again on that door: it was your father once more. He was more calm, but gloomier this time.

"'Louis,' he said to me, 'I am going to fight at daybreak with the Marquis d'Auray. It will be a duel to the death and with no witness but you. It is all settled. Give me hospitality for the night, and writing materials.'

"He sat at that table in the chair you occupy."

Paul sprang up, and merely leaned upon the chair henceforward, without sitting again.

"He sat up all the night. At dawn he came into my chamber and found me ready, for I had not lain down. As for you, poor child, unconscious still of human misery and passions, you were sleeping in your cot."

"Go on, go on!"

"Your father slowly stooped over you, leaning against the wall; and mournfully watching you, he said in a hollow voice:

"'Louis, should I be killed, harm might befall this babe, so you must hand him with this letter to my valet, Field, who is charged to take him to Selkirk, in Scotland, and leave him there in trusty hands. At the age of twenty-five he will bring you the other half of this piece of gold, and demand of you the secret of his origin; tell it him, for his mother then may be alone and friendless. The papers which confirm his birth must not be given him until after the marquis's death. All is in order now. Let us go forth, for it is the hour!'

"He bent down to you, and,

thorough man that he was, I saw a tear fall on your cheek."

"Continue," said Paul, in a stifled voice.

"The meeting-place was in a path of the park a hundred steps away. On arriving, we found the marquis, who had been waiting several minutes. On a bench beside him were loaded pistols. The adversaries saluted without saying a word. The marquis pointed to the weapons, of which each took one, and the pair—since the conditions had been regulated beforehand, as your father stated—went to stand thirty paces apart, mute and sombre, and then walked towards one another. Oh, I assure you it was a dreadful moment for me," proceeded the old man, as much moved as though he beheld the scene anew, "as I saw the space gradually lessen between the two men. When they were but ten paces apart, the marquis stopped and fired. I was watching your father. Not a muscle of his face winced, so that I believed him safe and sound. He continued to walk up to his opponent, and clapping the pistol mouth to his heart——"

"But I know he did not kill him!" cried out Paul, grasping the speaker's arm.

"He said: 'Your life is mine, and I might take it; but I want you to live to forgive me as I forgive you.' With these words he dropped dead—the marquis's bullet had gone through his chest."

"Oh, father, father!" exclaimed the young seaman, wringing his hands. "And the man who slew my father lives, is yet no old man, and has the strength to wield arms. We'll go and find him this day—this hour. You shall tell him: 'Behold his son, with whom you must fight!' Oh, this man, this man—woe to this man!"

"Heaven took charge of the vengeance," observed Achard, "the man went mad."

"It is true. I had forgotten," muttered Captain Jones.

"And in his madness," pursued the old servitor, "he ever sees that sanguinary scene, and ten times a day repeats the final words addressed him by your father."

"Ha! that is why the marchioness will not leave him for a minute."

"And why, under the pretext that he cannot bear to see his children, she has kept Emmanuel and Marguerite from him."

"Poor sister," sighed Paul, with the utmost tenderness. "And now she wishes to sacrifice her by marrying her, despite herself, to that scamp Lectoure."

"Yes," responded Achard, "but this scamp, on carrying Marguerite away to Paris, will give her brother a regiment of dragoons. The marchioness will no longer fear the presence of her children—her secret will henceforth abide between her and two old men who may die any time—maybe to-night. The grave tells no tales."

"But I—I?"

"You? is it known that you exist? have you sent any news since you ran away from Selkirk in your fifteenth year? might you not, also, have met some mishap on your road to

prevent your reaching the place assigned—as you have happily done? It is true that she has not forgotten you, but her hope is——"

"Do you believe that my mother——"

"I beg your pardon," said Achard, "that is true, I conjecture nothing. I was wrong, and beseech you to forget what I said."

"Yes, yes, my friend, speak of yourself—let us speak of my father."

"Need I add that his last wishes were executed? Field came after you in the day, and you were taken away. One-and-twenty years have passed since that period, but not one day has gone by without my having prayed for your coming at the stated time. Those prayers are fulfilled," concluded the old man, "thank Heaven! here you are! and your father lives again in you. I see him, and speak with him—I weep no more, for I am consoled."

"But he is dead—cut short without pause or hope—dead at the shot."

"Yes. I brought him here and laid him on the bed where you first drew life. I closed the door against everybody and went away to dig a grave. All day I spent in that painful duty, for, according to your father's wish, nobody was to share my terrible trust. At evening I came back for the corpse. The human heart is a strange thing, and the Heaven-sent hopefulness in it is hard to master. I had seen my lord fall, and felt his hands grow chill. I had kissed his freezing cheek, and had left him to dig his grave, and yet—with the duty to death accomplished and the pit hollowed out, returned with a bounding heart, for it seemed to me in my absence—albeit it required a miracle—life had been restored to him, and he would rise on his bed and speak. Alas, alas! the days of miracles have passed! Lazarus remained prone on his bed—dead, dead, dead!"

For a time the old man was voiceless and speechless, overcome, whilst tears silently coursed down his wrinkled visage.

"Yes, yes, thus it was," said the rover, sobbing to himself, "and you fulfilled your holy mission. Noble heart! let me kiss the hands which laid my father's body in the everlasting resting-place. You have remained as faithful to him in the grave as when he was in life. Poor watcher by the sepulchre! you remained near him so that tears should bedew the grass, and make it grow on the forgotten mound! Oh, how petty are they who believe they are great because their name has rung in the tempest and battle louder than the wind and the guns, beside you, old man of silent devotion! Bless me!" added Paul, sinking on his knees, "since my father is not here to bless me."

"Come to my arms, my boy, to my arms," said the servant; "but you make too much of an act simple and natural. Believe me, what you call my piety has not been without fruit for me. I

have seen how small a place man holds on earth, and how swiftly he is lost in the world when the Lord sets His face against him. Your father was young and brave, and had a bright future; he was a last descendant of an old line; a noble name was borne by him, and he had kinsfolk and friends. One would believe his path was visible up to the honours of the world. But your father suddenly disappeared as if the ground had fallen in under his feet. I do not know if some tearful glance may not have sought a trace of the lost one; but I do know that, in twenty years, no one has come to his tomb—no one knows that he lies where the grass is highest and greenest. And yet, proud, mad thing that he is, man believes he is of importance!"

"Did my mother never come?"

The old man made no reply.

"Well," continued Paul, "there will be two of us now who know the spot. Come and show it to me, for I promise you I will return to it every time my ship touches the coast of France."

With these words, he drew Achard into the outer room, but, even as they opened the door, they heard a slight sound towards the park. It was a servant from the *château* coming with Marguerite. Paul hurriedly drew back.

"It is my sister," he said to Achard. "Leave me alone for a little with her, for I need to speak to her. I have a word to tell her to give a happy night. Let us take pity on them who sit up awake and weep."

"Remember," said Achard, "that the secret I have revealed to you is also your mother's."

"Be easy, my old friend," replied he, pushing him into the back room. "I shall speak to her only of her own."

At this juncture Marguerite walked in.

CHAPTER X.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

MARGUERITE D'AURAY was coming, as usual, to bring some comforts to the old man, and it was not without astonishment that she saw in the room, where nobody but the cottager had ever met her eyes, a handsome young man, who looked at her with a soft eye and a kindly smile. She made a sign for the footman to set the basket down in a corner; he obeyed, and went out to wait beyond the door for his mistress. She walked up to Paul, saying,

"Excuse me, monsieur; but I expected to find my old friend Louis Achard here, and I bring him from my mother——"

Paul pointed towards the other room to denote that there was the object of her call, for he could not speak, so surely he felt that the tone of his voice would betray his emotions. The young lady thanked him with a scarcely perceptible nod and went in there.

Her half-brother watched her, pressing his hand on his heart. His virgin soul, where love had never entered, opened in all freshness to the first feelings of family. Isolated as he had always been, having no friends but the rough sons of Neptune, all his heart held of gentleness and tenderness had been turned to heaven, and, although his religion would not have seemed orthodox to a strict Christian, it was not the less true that the poetry overflowing in all his speech was nothing else than one eternal prayer. It was therefore, not astonishing that the first feelings rising in his bosom, though quite brotherly, were as excited and disordered as the emotions of love.

"Oh," muttered he, when the young lady had vanished, "poor, lonely one that I am, how am I going to withhold myself from taking you by the hand when you come out, and saying: 'Marguerite, my sister—no woman has ever loved me in any way! grant me your sisterly affection.' Oh, mother, mother, in depriving me of your endearments you also robbed me of this angel's. May Heaven give you in eternity that happiness which you banished from yourself and others."

"Good-bye!" said Marguerite to the old man, as she re-opened the door. "I particularly wanted to come this time, as I no longer know about my coming again."

She proceeded towards the outer door, pensively, with a drooping head, not seeing the sea-captain, nor remembering that a young gentleman was there when she came in. He watched her, holding out his arms to stop

her, his eyes humid and his bosom oppressed. It was not until he saw her hand touch the door-latch that he exclaimed:

"Marguerite!"

She turned in amazement, but, understanding nothing of this odd familiarity on the part of a complete stranger, she half-opened the door to go.

"Marguerite," said the young seaman, taking a step towards his half-sister, "do you not hear me call you?"

"It is true that my name is Marguerite, monsieur," the young lady replied with dignity, "but I could not think that the word would be spoken to me, unqualified, by a person I have not the advantage of knowing."

"But I know you," broke forth Paul, going over to her, closing the door and leading her back into the room, "I know that you are unhappy and have not a kindred soul to which to pour out your woe—not an arm of which to ask the support."

"You forget my Father above," responded she, raising her hand and head heavenward at the same time.

"Nay, nay, Marguerite, I do not forget Him, for He sent me to offer you what you wanted—to tell you, when all hearts and mouths close against you, that I am your friend—eternally devoted."

"Oh, monsieur," said she, "the words you utter are very sacred and solemn, and, unfortunately, it is difficult for me to believe them without proof."

"Suppose I give you one?" said Paul Jones.

"Impossible!"

"A proof incontestable," persisted the captain.

"In that case," began she, with an indefinable tone, in which doubt was giving way to hope, "I, then—but, no, no!"

"Do you know this ring?" challenged Paul, showing the jewel which opened her bracelet.

"Clemency of Heaven!" cried out the girl, "have pity on me! Is he dead?"

"He is living."

"But loves me no more?"

"Yes, he does!"

"If living, and loving me—oh! it's enough to turn me mad! what was I saying? If he be living and loves me, how can this ring have come into your hands?"

"It was entrusted to me as a token of recognition."

"Have I entrusted this bracelet to anyone?" retorted Marguerite, turning up her sleeve; "look!"

"That's another matter. You are not outlawed and dishonoured in all eyes—flung into the thick of a convict crew!"

"What odds is that, when he is innocent and is beloved?"

"He thought," continued Paul, wishing to see how far his sister's love and devotion would go, "he thought that, separated for ever from society as he is, it became him to offer you—if not restore—the liberty of the disposal of your hand."

"When a woman sets her hand in a man's as a pledge, as I have done," replied Marguerite, "believe me, she has no excuse but loving eternally, and so I do."

"Then you are an angel!" burst forth the sea-lion.

"Tell me all," went on the young lady, grasping his hands, and looking supplicatingly at him.

"What?"

"You must have seen him?"

"I am his friend—his brother."

"Oh, speak to me of him then!" she appealed, yielding herself entirely to her love, and forgetting that she was thus questioning a man seen for the first time. "What is the poor fellow doing—to what does he look forward?"

"He loves you, and so he expects to see you again."

"Then he has told you?"

"All."

"Ah!" she sighed, lowering her brow, over which a sudden glow ran, replacing, like the flash of a flame, the pallor habitually settled there.

Paul went up to her and said,

"You are a saintly girl!"

"Do you not despise me, then?" she murmured, venturing to raise her eyes.

"Marguerite, if I had a sister, I should pray Heaven to have her resemble you," was his answer.

"You would have a most unhappy sister," said she, leaning on his arm and melting in tears.

"I am not so sure about that," objected Paul.

"Because you do not know."

"What?"

"That the Baron de Lectoure is to arrive to-morrow morning."

"I knew so."

"And to-morrow the contract will be signed."

"I knew so."

"What can you have me hope in such an extremity? To whom am I to apply? Of whom implore? My brother! Heaven knows I forgive him, but he cannot understand me. My mother? Oh, you do not know what my mother is. A woman of reputation intact, virtue severe, and will inflexible. Never having strayed, she does not believe anyone could be misled, and when she says, 'I will have it so,' there is nothing more to be done than bow the head, weep, and obey. My father? I know that they will have to bring my father out of the rooms where he has been twenty years confined, to sign the paper. It would be a chance of relief for anybody less unfortunate and strongly doomed than myself. But you are unaware that he has lost his senses, and with them went any feeling of fatherly love. Besides, it is ten years since I saw my father, pressed his tremulous hands, and kissed his white locks. He no longer knows he has a daughter or a heart. He would not even recognise me, and, if he did, and felt pity for me, my mother would only have to put a pen in his hand and bid him 'Sign, for I will it!' and he would sign—poor, weak old man—the death-warrant of his child."

"Yes, yes, I know all this as well as you, my poor child," remarked Paul, "but cheer up, that paper is not yet signed."

"Who will prevent it?"

"I."

"You?"

"Be tranquil. I shall be at the family council to-morrow."

"Who would present you?"

"I have a way."

"My brother is violent, and easily carried away. Oh, for goodness' sake take care not to ruin me completely in trying to save me."

"Your brother shall be as sacred to me as yourself, Marguerite. Fear nothing, and rely on me."

"Oh, I do believe you, and I rely on you," rejoined Marguerite, as if conquering her long incredulity. "For would you have found me merely to deceive me? What interest have you to betray me?"

"None at all; you are right. Let us change the subject. What did you intend to do about the Baron de Lectoure?"

"Tell him all."

"I could worship you as a sister," added Paul.

"You are good," said Marguerite, "I believe Heaven sent you."

"Believe it."

"So we shall meet to-morrow evening."

"Do not be surprised or frightened by anything; but try to inform me, by a note, or a word, or a sign, of the result of your interview with Lectoure."

"I will try."

"It is getting late, and your servant may grow astonished at the length of our conference. Return home and do not speak about me to anybody. Farewell!"

"Farewell," said Marguerite, "though I know not what name to give you."

"Consider me a brother."

"God bless you, my brother."

"Oh, sister, sister," exclaimed Paul, convulsively embracing her, "you are the first to make me hear so sweet a word—Heaven reward you for it."

The astonished girl receded, but, returning, she offered her hand, which he pressed a last time, and she departed. He went to the other room door and opened it.

"Old man," said he, "take me to my father's grave."

CHAPTER XI.

THE PRIVATE INTERVIEW.

ON the day after that on which Paul Jones learnt the secret of his birth, the dwellers in the *château* of the Aurays awoke more perturbed than ever by the fears and expectations which their divers interests created, for it was to be a decisive day.

The marchioness, whom our readers know to be a haughty, inflexible lady, and not a perverse and wicked one, saw her anguish renewed every day, for it was especially in her children's eyes that she wished to preserve the stainless reputation of which the usurpation cost her so dear. In her eyes, Lectoure was not only a suitable match, bearing a name worthy of hers, but a good genius who, at the same blow, removed her daughter afar from her as a bride, and induced the prime minister, by the alliance, to give the promise of a regiment to her son. Once both were out of the way, the base-born might come, for the secret revealed would have no echo. Besides, there was a thousand ways of shutting his mouth. The marchioness's fortune was large, and she believed gold in such cases to have an infallible effect. Hence she was ardent for this union with all the strength of her dread. It follows that she not only seconded Lectoure's eagerness, but excited Emmanuel's.

The last, weary of living as a nobody in Paris, or buried in Brittany, lost among the fashionable youths forming the royal household, or relegated to the antiquated halls of his ancestors in company with the family portraits, eagerly knocked on the golden door which his future brother-in-law engaged to open for him at Versailles.

His sister's tears and sorrows had really afflicted him for a space, for he was ambitious rather from the fear of the tedium in his manor, and the desire to parade at the front of his regiment, and turn heads by the taste and richness of his uniform, than from pride and hardness of heart. But, himself incapable of a painful passion, he regarded his sister's falling in love, despite its serious consequences, as a girlish attachment which the tumult and pleasures of society would soon efface from her memory, and he believed it certain that a year would not pass without her being the first to thank him for having done violence to her sentiments.

As for Marguerite—poor victim so irrevocably condemned to be immolated to the apprehensions of one and the ambition of the other, the scene with Paul Jones had left a profound impression

on her; she could not account for the strange feeling rising in her through the dashing young gentleman who transmitted Lusignan's words, encouraged her about the poor exile's fate, and finally embraced her while calling her a sister. A hope, vague and instinctive, whispered to her heart that this man, as he said, had received from on high the mission to protect her; but, as she was ignorant what tie united them, what secret made him master over her mother's will, and what influence, in short, he might exercise over her future, she dare not dwell on ideas of happiness from having become habituated during six months to regard death as the only possible termination to her misfortune.

Alone among the many emotions palpitating around him, the marquis remained in his inert and impassible indifference, for the world had ceased to move from the day that he had lost his reason. Constantly absorbed in one remembrance, that of the deadly duel without seconds, mumbling the words which the Count de Morlaix had spoken in forgiving him, he was an old man as feeble as a child, whom his wife commanded with a gesture, and who received from her cold and continuous will all the impulses obeyed for twenty years by the instinct which had survived his free will and reason.

Nevertheless, a kind of revolution had taken place in his habits this day. A valet had entered his rooms to care for his dressing; his uniform as *mestre-de-camp* had been put on him, and he was arrayed with the different orders to which he belonged. Then, the marchioness, putting a pen between his fingers, had ordered him to sign his name by way of trial, and he had obeyed passively and heedlessly, without suspecting that he was rehearsing an executioner's part.

About three o'clock in the afternoon a postchaise, the rumble of the wheels being heard very differently by the three persons who expected it, rolled into the courtyard. Emmanuel hastened to run to the staircase to welcome his future brother-in-law, for it was he who had arrived.

Lectoure lightly descended from the vehicle. He had stopped at the last stage to don his reception dress, so that he appeared in all the elegance of the latest mode of court. Emmanuel smiled at this precaution, for it was evident that Lectoure had not wished to lose any personal advantages by presenting himself in travelling costume. His intimate acquaintance with female society taught him that the sex almost always judges by the first glance, and that nothing effaces the good or bad impression transmitted by it to their head or heart. For this matter, justice ought to be rendered to the baron; his graceful and stylish aspect would have been dangerous to any woman but one whose heart was pre-engaged.

"Allow me, my dear baron," said the count, advancing, "in the absence of the ladies, to do

the honours of the manor of my ancestors. Look!" he continued, pausing at the head of the steps, and pointing to the bastions and turrets, "that dates from Philip Augustus for architecture, and Henry IV. for decorations."

"Upon my honour, it is a charming fortress," replied the guest, with the affected tone adopted by the youth of that epoch; "and it exhales for miles about an odour of knightliness, chivalry, and all that sort of thing, which would exhilarate an upstart. If ever," he added, as, after entering a vestibule, they passed through a gallery adorned with family portraits on both walls, "if ever the fancy sways me to enter into rebellion against his most Christian Majesty, I should beg you to lend me this jewel—and the garrison together with it," he concluded, raising his eyes to the long file of forefathers.

"Thirty-three quarters!—I do not say in flesh and blood," returned Emmanuel, "for they have long been dust, but in painting, as you see. It commences with a knight, Hugues d'Auray, who accompanied King Louis VII. on the Crusade; it passes on by my aunt Deborah, whom you see in the dress of Judith, and it ends, without break in the heirs male, in the last member of the illustrious race, your most humble and obedient servant, Emmanuel d'Auray."

"It is altogether worthy of respect, and no line could be more authentic."

"Yes; but as I do not feel I am patriarchal enough," said Emmanuel, going before the baron to show him the way to his room, "to waste my life in this formidable gathering, I hope, baron, you intend to lift me out of it."

"Beyond doubt, my dear count," responded Lectoure, following him, "and I wanted to bring you your commission as a wedding present. I heard of a lieutenancy vacant in the Queen's Dragoon Guards, and I went yesterday to Minister de Maurepas to solicit it for you, when I learned that the company had been accorded at the request of some mysterious sea-swash-buckler, an admiral, corsair, pirate, a fantastic character, whom the queen set in the fashion by giving him her hand to kiss, and the king has taken a liking to, because he helped the Americans to beat our old historic foes. So that, for that exploit, his Majesty has decorated him with the Order of Military Merit, and given him a gold-hilted sword, as he might have done to a scion of nobility. In short, on that side I drew blank, but, rest easy, I shall hunt on another."

"Very well," replied Emmanuel. "The kind of weapon little matters, horse or foot, sea or land; what I want is a grade befitting my name and a position becoming our wealth."

"Quite so, you shall have them."

"But," went on Emmanuel, changing the conversation, "how do you manage to keep the thousand pledges you give?"

"Why," answered the baron, extending himself on a reclining

chair, for they had at last reached his room, and using the negligent tone appertaining to the privileged class alone, "I merely state the matter frankly. At the hour of the queen's card-playing I announced that I contemplated matrimony."

"Great Heavens! that was heroism, particularly if you confessed that you had chosen your wife in the wilderness of Lower Brittany."

"I did confess it."

"Then compassion gave place to rage," suggested Emmanuel.

"Well, you will understand, my dear count," said Lectoure, crossing his legs and swinging the upper foot with a regular movement like a pendulum's, "our ladies of the court believe the sun rises at Paris and sets at Versailles. All the rest of France is the same to them as Lapland, Greenland, and Nova Zembla. So, as you hint, my dear count, they expect to see me bring back from the North Pole some unheard-of being with awful hands and vast feet! Happily," he added, with a half-fearing, half-questioning tone, "they are mistaken; eh, Emmanuel? On the contrary, you tell me that your sister——"

"You shall see her," replied the nobleman.

"It will be a great disappointment for our poor Duchess de Chaulne. However, she must console herself in another quarter——"

"What do you want?"

This question arose from the presence of the host's valet, who had opened the door, on the sill of which he stood waiting, like a well-trained domestic, till his master addressed him.

"Mdlle. Marguerite d'Auray sent me to beg of M. le Baron de Lectoure the honour of a private interview."

"With me?" queried the intended groom, rising. "Why, with the utmost pleasure!"

"No, no, some error," disputed Emmanuel. "You are blundering, Célestin!"

"I have the honour to assure your lordship," replied the man, persisting, "that I am exactly and faithfully carrying out the order given me."

"Impossible!" ejaculated the nobleman, most disquieted by his sister's venturesome step. "Baron, if you will believe me, you must send this madcap to interview her cat and parrot."

"Not at all, not at all," responded Lectoure. "What a Blue-Beard of a brother we have here! Célestin—you called the man 'Célestin,' I think?" Emmanuel testily nodded. "Well, Célestin, tell my beautiful *fiancée* that I am at her feet, and abide her orders to go to her or await her here. This is for your emolument as ambassador—" giving him a purse. "I hope, count, that you trust me so far as to allow this confab."

"It is the most ridiculous act ever known!"

"Dear, no!" rejoined Lectoure, "on the contrary, it is perfectly meet. I am not a crowned head, to wed a woman by proxy on seeing her portrait. I long to see her in person. Get along with you, Emmanuel," he went on, pushing his host to a

side door, so that he should not meet his sister. "By-the-way, between ourselves—she is not a humpback?"

"Nonsense! no!" responded the count, "quite the reverse—she is lovely as an angel."

"Then, what does it signify?" said the suitor. "Come, come, must I call my guards?"

"No; but, on my word, I am afraid that this little hoyden, having no idea of society, is coming to ruin all we have planned."

"If that's all, reassure yourself," rejoined Lectoure, opening the door. "I am too fond of the brother not to let some caprice pass in your sister, and I pledge you my faith as a nobleman that—unless the Prince of Evil intervenes—who I hope is busy elsewhere at present—Mdlle. Marguerite d'Auray will be Madame la Baronne de Lectoure within three days, and you will have your regiment in a month."

This promise seemed to encourage the hearer in some degree, for he let himself be put out of the door without further opposition. Lectoure instantly ran to the mirror to repair the slight traces of disorder in his toilet from the jolting in the last three leagues. He had barely given his hair and garments the proper adjustment before the door reopened and Célestin announced,

"Mdlle. Marguerite d'Auray."

The baron, turning, saw his bride, pale and trembling, on the threshold. Whatever the trust he had given d'Auray's promises, some doubt had lingered at the bottom of his heart, if not on the beauty, about the bearing and manners of the woman to become his wife. So his amazement was wonderfully great when he saw the frail and graceful creature appear whom the most severe stickler for shape could only have reproached for a little lack of colour.

Marriages such as Lectoure expected to contract were not rare at a period when questions of rank and pecuniary inducements generally settled alliances between noble houses, but what would not happen once in a thousand times was this discovery in the baron's instance, of a woman in the depths of a province, rich with an immense fortune; at first sight of her he would judge that she was worthy, by her carriage, style and beauty, of figuring among the most brilliant circles of the court. Hence he advanced towards her no longer with the superiority of a courtier over a provincial lady, but with the respectful ease which formed the seal of good society at this epoch of transition.

"Pardon me, lady," he said, offering to lead her to the arm-chair, but she did not accept the hand; "it was my place to entreat the favour which you grant me, and nothing, believe me, but the fear of being bold gave me the mere appearance of not having wished to anticipate you."

"I thank you for the delicacy, M. le Baron," tremulously returned Marguerite, drawing back and remaining standing, "it emboldens me still more in the confidence which, without having

seen you or known you, I had in your honour and your loyalty."

"Whatever is the aim of such confidence, it does me honour, lady, and I will try to make myself worthy of it. But what's the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing!" faltered Marguerite, trying to repress her emotion; "but I have to tell you—I beg your pardon—but I am not free!" She tottered. The baron sprang towards her and would have supported her, but he had hardly touched her before a burning flush flamed on her cheeks, and she recoiled with a feeling based rather on modesty than repugnance. But Lectoure had caught her hand, and he led her towards an armchair, on which she leaned, not caring to take a seat.

"Great Goodness!" said the baron, clinging to the hand, "is what brought you here so very hard to say? Or is it that my title of accepted suitor already gives me the imposing air of husband, without my being conscious of it?"

Marguerite made a fresh attempt to disengage her hand from Lectoure's, which forced him to lower his eyes upon it.

"By Jupiter!" said he, "was it not enough to have an adorable figure and a fairy waist! but here are charming hands — queenly hands! It's enough to be the death of a man!"

"M. le Baron," said Marguerite, making a final effort to withdraw her hand, "I hope the words you speak are pure gallantry."

"No, on my soul!" vowed Lectoure, "they are entire truth."

"Well, I hope that even if you think what you deem it your duty to tell me, which I beg to doubt, such motives will not make you attach a greater value to the union projected between us."

"Excuse me! I swear it does!"

"And yet," continued Marguerite, catching her breath, from her bosom being oppressed, "you look upon marriage as a serious matter?"

"That depends," Lectoure smilingly replied; "if I had to marry a rich old dowager, for instance."

"In short," said Marguerite, with a more resolute accent, "you will excuse me if I am wrong, but I thought that you expected reciprocal feelings in the alliance proposed between us."

"Never!" broke in the suitor, who seemed to show as much care to avoid the frank, desired explanation, as Marguerite did of persistence to provoke it; "never! No, since I have seen you, particularly, I have not hoped to be worthy of your love; nevertheless, my name and social position — in the lack of influence on your heart, may give me claims to your hand."

"But how can you separate one from the other?" inquired Marguerite in apprehension.

"Like three-quarters of married couples, lady," responded Lectoure with a freedom which would at once have checked confidence on the lips

of any less candid than Marguerite. "They marry — for the name of the thing—it is a position gained — a social arrangement. How can you imagine that love and feeling would have anything to do with the matter?"

"Pardon me, for I must be badly explaining myself," said Marguerite, doing violence to herself in order to conceal from the man on whom her future depended, the painful impression caused by his words. "But you must attribute my hesitation to the timidity of one who is forced by imperious circumstances to speak on such a subject."

"Indeed, no," responded Lectoure, bowing and giving his voice a tone approaching raillery; "on the contrary, lady, you speak like Clarissa Harlowe, and all is clear as day. Nature has made me keen enough to understand what is said to me, even when veiled."

"What?" exclaimed Marguerite, "do you understand what I wanted to say to you, and yet you let me continue? What? when, on searching the depths of my heart and questioning my feelings, I see the impossibility of ever caring for any one presented to me as husband——?"

"In that case," interrupted Lectoure, with the same mocking accent, "you ought not to tell him."

"Why so?"

"Because—because it shows too much simplicity."

"But if I make the avowal through delicacy and not simplicity? Suppose I add—may what is shameful in the avowal fall on those who force me to make it—suppose I add that I have loved—and still love."

"Oh, some little cousin or other," said Lectoure, heedlessly crossing his legs and trifling with his lace ruffle. "These little cousins are a pestilent brood, upon my word. But, luckily, everybody knows what such attachments are, and there is no boarding-school girl who does not go back to her studies after the holidays with a flame in her heart."

"Unfortunately for me," responded Marguerite, in a voice as sad and grave as her dialoguist's was light and mocking, "I am no longer a school-girl, and, though young, have long passed the age of puerile sports and childish attachments. When I speak to the man who honours me by soliciting my hand and offering me his name, of my love for another, he ought to think that I speak of a grave, deep, and eternal love—one of those which leave their trace in the heart, and furrow their passage in life."

"Hang it all!" muttered Lectoure, as though he began to give more importance to the revelation; "this is becoming pastoral — shepherdess, lambs, and all that sort of thing. Come, come, is it some boy whom we may receive under our roof?"

"Oh!" cried out Marguerite, snatching at the hope which those words seemed to give her; "Oh, believe me, he is the best and most devoted spirit that can be."

"I did not ask you anything of that sort, and I was not alluding to good qualities of the heart. We'll credit him with all of them, of course. I ask you if he is of noble race, and if a lady can name him to her husband without depreciating the latter."

"His father—whom he lost when young—a friend of my father's—was counsellor to the high court of Rennes."

"Gentleman by Act of Parliament only," sneered Lectoure, dropping his lower lip in token of scorn. "I would have preferred something else. At least, Knight of Malta, I hope?"

"He was intended for a soldier."

"Well, then, we'll get him a company, and make somebody of him. That is settled. It is well. Listen to me. He shall pass six months under the flag for the look of the thing, obtain leave, which will not be difficult, since this is not war time, and be presented to us by a mutual friend, and all is over."

"I do not follow you," said Marguerite, eyeing the speaker with an expression of profound astonishment.

"Yet, what I say is plain enough," he answered, pettishly. "You have made pledges on your part, so have I on mine—which ought not to prevent a union being accomplished, suitable in all respects, and once celebrated, faith! meseems we'll make it tolerable. Do you understand, at last?"

"I beg your pardon," exclaimed Marguerite, shrinking from her own words as though they had the power to repel her. "I have been imprudent—guilty, some may say; but, just as I am, I did not believe I deserved such an insult! Oh, the fire of shame burns my cheek, still more for you than me. Yes, I understand now. Love apparent and love concealed! the visage of vice and the mask of virtue! And it is to me, daughter of the Marchioness d'Auray, to whom this shameful, infamous, and degrading bargain is proposed! Oh!" proceeded she, letting herself fall on the chair, and hiding her face in her hands, "I must be a most unhappy, despicable, and hopeless creature! Oh, Heaven! Heaven!"

"Emmanuel, Emmanuel!" called out the baron, opening the door behind which he suspected the brother to be. "Come, come, dear fellow, your sister has hysterics. We must pay attention to such ails, or they become chronic. The Countess de Meulan died of them. Here's my smelling-bottle, count; make her inhale the salts, whilst I take a walk in the park. If you have nothing to do, come and join me, bringing news, I entreat, of the lady."

Whereupon the court gallant ambled forth with remarkable jauntiness, leaving the two face to face.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHALLENGE.

On the same day as the interview of Marguerite and Lectoure took place, with a result quite contrary to what the former had hoped, the dinner bell called the baron in to dinner. Emmanuel did the honours of the board, for the marchioness had remained by her husband, and Marguerite had asked leave not to come down. The other guests were the notary, the relatives and the witnesses. The meal was dull, notwithstanding Lectoure's imperturbable jollity; but it was clear that, underneath this lively humour, so active that it seemed feverish, he had the intention of stunning himself. From time to time, in fact, this bitter gaiety drooped suddenly like a lamp going out for lack of oil; and yet would flash up anew more brightly than ever as the flame does at the last drop of fuel.

At seven, all rose to go into the drawing-room.

It is difficult to form an idea of the strange sight presented by this old mansion; its vast apartments were hung with damask arras of Gothic design, and contained furniture of the time of Louis XIII.; shut up for a long while, they seemed to have grown unused to wear. Hence, despite the lavish lighting displayed by the footmen, the flickering tapers were insufficient for immense rooms with deep doorways remaining still shadowed, and voices rang as under the arcades of a cathedral. The scanty number of the guests, to join whom three or four neighbouring squires dropped in during the evening, enhanced the gloom hovering under the emblazoned ceiling-beams of the old hall.

In the centre of one of them, the same where Emmanuel on his return from town had received Captain Paul Jones, a solemnly prepared table rose, supporting a closed portfolio which, to strange eyes ignorant of what was in preparation, would seem to hold a death-sentence rather than a marriage contract.

Amid these sad sights and sombre impressions, a strident burst of mocking laughter would break upon a group of persons talking low to one another; it was Lectoure amusing himself at the expense of some honest rural gentleman, without pity for his host, on whom fell back in some sort part of the jesting.

At times, nevertheless, the bridegroom anxiously looked from one end of the room to the other; suddenly a cloud would pass over his brow, for he did not see anybody come, neither the marquis, nor the marchioness, nor their daughter.

As stated, the two former had not come down to dinner, and his brief interview with the last, careless as he forced himself to appear, had not left him without disquietude about what would happen at the signing of the contract in the evening.

Emmanuel was not himself exempt from misgivings, and he had made up his mind to go upstairs to his sister, when he was beckoned to by Lectoure as they were passing in a side room.

"Egad! you arrive in the nick of time, my dear count," he said, while having the air of lending profound attention to an honest squire with whom he appeared on terms of perfect friendship. "Here is M. de Nozay, who tells me a plaguy odd story, on my word! Let me tell you," he went on, turning to the sporting gentleman, "it was a delightful hunt, and quite fit to be fashionable too! I also have some pools and marshes, so I must ask my steward when I get back to town where they are situated. Do you take many ducks in that way?"

"Immensely," responded the squire with good nature, proving that Lectoure might without danger maintain the conversation in the same key for some time to come.

"What wonderful catch was this?" inquired Emmanuel.

"You must picture this gentleman wading into the water up to his neck," began Lectoure, with the greatest coolness.

"What season, may I ask?"

"December or January," was the reply of the Nimrod.

"There could be nothing more picturesque. I was saying that this gentleman walks into the water up to his neck, puts a pumpkin on over his head, and hides himself among the rushes. This so disguises him that the ducks do not in the least recognise him, and let him get well within range. Is not that the way?"

"As if you were looking at it."

"You do not really say so?" cried Emmanuel.

"And the gentleman kills as many as he likes," resumed Lectoure.

"Dozens!" added the sportsman, enchanted at the attention given him by the young noblemen.

"This ought to please your wife, if she is fond of ducks," said Emmanuel.

"Very," responded M. de Nozay.

"I hope you will do me the honour of presenting me to a lady of such good taste," said Lectoure, bowing.

"With the greatest of pleasure, M. le Baron."

"I promise you that, as soon as I return from Versailles, the first thing I do will be to speak of this wild-fowling, at the *premier lever* of the king, and I am convinced that his Majesty will make a trial of it in the ornamental water."

"Excuse me, baron," said Emmanuel, taking Lectoure's arm and bending over to his ear, "but this is a neighbour whom it is impossible not to receive on such a solemnity."

"How now!" returned Lectoure, employing the same pre-

caution not to be heard by the subject of their comments; "you would have been wrong to deprive me of the treat. He very properly is included in the advantages that accrue to me with my future wife, and I should have been grieved not to make his acquaintance."

"M. de Lajarry!" announced the footman.

"A sporting companion?" queried Lectoure.

"No, it is a traveller," replied de Nozay.

"Aha!" said Lectoure, in a tone betokening that the newcomer would have not too much time to fall on guard.

Scarcely had he uttered the exclamation before the new guest entered, clad in a fur-trimmed Polish overcoat.

"How you are decked out, dear Lajarry!" ejaculated d'Auray, going to meet him and give his hand. "On my honour, you look like the Czar of Russia!"

"My dear count," replied the other, shivering, though it was not at all cold, "it is enough to make anyone shudder to come from Naples. Br-r-roo!"

"Oh, the gentleman arrives from Naples?" inquired Lectoure, striking into the conversation.

"In a straight line."

"Of course you made the ascent of Vesuvius?"

"No; I was quite satisfied to look at it out of my window. Besides," said the gentleman-traveller, with an accent of scorn most humiliating for the volcano, "Vesuvius is not the greatest curiosity at Naples. A hole in a hill that smokes! Pshaw! my chimney does as much when the wind comes off the sea. Moreover, my wife has a dreadful terror of eruptions."

"But you visited the Grotta del Cane?" continued the banterer.

"To what end?" returned Lejarry, "to see a dog with the vapours? Give the first one you meet a puff of tobacco-smoke and he will act the same. Besides, Madame Lajarry is fond of canines, and it would have caused her pain."

"I hope, at least," said Emmanuel, "that a learned man like you did not neglect the Solfaterra?"

"I? Never set foot there! I can easily imagine three or four rods of brimstone, of no use whatever except to make matches. Besides, Madame Lajarry cannot endure the smell of sulphur."

"What do you think of this one?" questioned Emmanuel, as he conducted Lectoure into the hall for the ceremony.

"I do not know whether it may not be, because I saw the other first," responded Lectoure, "but I prefer him."

"Captain Paul!" suddenly announced the domestic.

"Eh?" said Emmanuel, turning round.

"Who is this?" queried Lectoure, swaggering. "More rustic neighbours?"

"No; this is another matter," replied the count, uneasily. "How dare the man show himself here?"

"Eh, eh? Some lowborn peasant—but rich? No! A poet

—musician—painter? Well, I assure you, Emmanuel, we begin to receive this sort of people. That confounded philosophy has mixed all classes. We must submit to the inevitable. We have reached this point. An artist seats himself beside a peer, elbows him, merely touches the cock of his hat to him, and remains seated when his patron rises; they chat of court gossip, laughing, jesting, and wrangling. It is bad taste of the very first fashion."

"You mistake, Lectoure," observed Emmanuel; "this is neither poet, painter, nor musician, but a person I must speak with alone. Take Nozay away whilst I remove Lajarry."

The young nobles took each an arm of the hobbledehoys and led them away, speaking of sport and travels.

The side-doors were hardly closed behind them when the privateersman appeared at the centre one.

He knew the room again, with a door in each corner, one leading into a library, and another into the closet, where, on his previous visit, he had awaited the result of the conference between Marguerite and Emmanuel.

Going up to the table he stood there for a while, alternately looking at the doors, as if he expected to see one or the other open. His expectation was not deceived. In an instant the library door opened a little and he perceived a white form in the shades. He sprang towards her.

"Is that you, Marguerite?" he queried.

"Yes," was the answer in a trembling voice.

"Well?"

"I told him all."

"Go on!"

"In ten minutes the contract will be signed."

"I expected as much. He is a scoundrel."

"What's to be done?" inquired the young lady.

"Have courage, Marguerite!"

"Courage? I have no more now."

"This will restore it," said Paul, handing her a note.

"What does this contain?"

"The intelligence about your lover, and where he is awaiting you."

"My lover! Oh, you are so kind," ejaculated Marguerite, trying to kiss the hand which tendered the paper.

"Silence! somebody is coming," said the captain. "Whatever happens, you will see me again at Achard's."

Marguerite quickly shut the door without answering him, for she had recognised her brother's footsteps. Paul turned to meet him, so that the two young men joined one another near the table.

"I expected you at another time, and before a less numerous company," said Emmanuel, first to break the silence.

"But it seems to me we are alone," remarked the uninvited guest, looking around him.

"Yes, but we sign the contract here, and the room will be full of company shortly."

"In a short time much can be said, my lord."

"You are right," agreed the

count, "but one must meet a man who can understand quickly."

"I am listening," said the captain.

"You spoke of letters," proceeded Emmanuel, approaching the other more nearly, and lowering his voice.

"It is true," was the calm answer.

"You put a price on those letters?"

"True again."

"Well, if you are a gentleman, for the sum enclosed in this pocket-book, you ought to be ready to hand them to me."

"Yes, my lord, yes," returned Paul Jones, "so things stood when I believed that your sister, forgetting the vow she made, and the lover to whom it was made, seconded your ambition with her perjury. Then I thought it was a baptism of tears full bitter enough to enter a new country without tie or kin, not at least to have a fortune for the start. So I did, indeed, demand that sum for those letters. But the position is changed at present, my lord. I have seen your sister throw herself at your feet, and heard her supplicate you not to force her into this infamous marriage, and no tears, prayers, or supplications had any power over your heart. Hence it is my duty, as one who holds your honour, and your family's, in my grasp, to save the woman from despair, as I will save the man from poverty. These letters will be transmitted to you, my lord, when, on this table, instead of our signing the contract for the marriage of your sister with the Baron de Lectoure, we sign that for her union with M. Anatole de Lusignan."

"Never, never!"

"You can have them solely on that condition, my lord."

"Oh, perhaps there is some means of forcing you to give them up."

"I am not aware of any," replied the seaman, coolly.

"Will you return those letters?"

"Count," said Paul, regarding Emmanuel with an expression on his face, inexplicable to the other, "listen to me."

"Will you return those letters?"

"Count!"

"Yes, or no?"

"Two words——"

"Yes, or no?"

"No!" said the privateersman, coldly.

"Then, you have a sword by your side, like myself; we are gentlemen, both, or I would fain believe you are one. Let us go out, captain, and but one return who, free and empowered by the other's death, may do what he likes with them."

"I regret that I cannot accept your invitation, my lord."

"What! you wear this uniform—this cross—this sword, and yet you refuse a duel?"

"Yes, Emmanuel, I do refuse."

"Why so?"

"Because I cannot fight with you, believe me."

"You cannot?"

"On my honour!"

"You say you cannot fight with me?"

At this moment, a peal of laughter was audible behind the

two, who turned. Lectoure was there.

"But," continued Paul, holding out his hand towards the baron, "I can fight with this gentleman, who is an infamous scoundrel!"

Burning redness passed over Lectoure's countenance like the reflection of a flame. He started to meet the challenger, but he stopped.

"It is well, monsieur," he said, "send your second to the count. They will arrange the affair."

"You will understand that our meeting is only deferred," said Emmanuel.

"Silence!" answered Paul Jones, "for your mother is announced."

"Yes, silence! to-morrow, Lectoure," added the count. "Let us go meet my mother."

The sea captain silently watched the young men depart before stepping into the closet, known to him previously as a place of concealment.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VOICE OF THE DEAD.

AT the time when Captain Paul Jones glided into the closet, the marchioness appeared at the drawing-room door, followed by the notary and the different persons invited to the ceremony. Joyous as should have been the circumstance, the lady had not deemed it her duty to cast aside her mourning vesture, and, clad in black as usual, she slightly preceded the marquis, whom nobody there, not even his son, had seen for years.

Such was the potency of the traditions of etiquette that the marchioness was not willing for the contract of her daughter to be signed without the head of the family, albeit out of his senses, presiding at the ceremony. Far from easy as it was to intimidate Lectoure, the grim figure produced the habitual effect upon him, and, seeing her so grave and dignified, he bowed with a feeling of deep respect.

"I am obliged to you, gentlemen," said the marchioness, saluting those who accompanied her, "for the honour you have done me in witnessing the betrothal of Mdlle. Marguerite d'Auray with M. le Baron de Lectoure. It has been my wish for the marquis, ailing though he is, to appear at this gathering and to thank you, at all events by his presence if he cannot by his speech. You know his state of mind, so do not be astonished if he should stammer some disconnected words——"

"Yes, madame," interrupted Lectoure, "we do know of the affliction which struck him, and we admire the devoted wife who has supported half his woe these twenty years."

"You see, madame," said Emmanuel, going up to his mother and kissing her hand, "everybody hails your conjugal piety."

"Where is Marguerite?" inquired the marchioness in an undertone.

"She was here a moment ago," was Emmanuel's reply.

"Let her be apprised," continued his mother in the same tone.

"The Marquis d'Auray!" announced the footman.

Everybody stood away so as to uncover the doorway, and all eyes turned to the spot where the new character was to appear. This curiosity was not slow in being satisfied, for the marquis came in almost

instantly, supported by two servants.

He was an old man, whose countenance, in spite of the furrows of suffering, still preserved the stamp of nobility and dignity which had made him one of the most distinguished figures at court. His large, feverish, hollow eyes wandered round over the whole assemblage with a strange expression of astonishment. He wore his military dress, with the collar of the Holy Ghost round his neck, and the ribbon of St. Louis at his buttonhole. He walked slowly forward, without uttering a word. The two footmen helped him, amid unbroken silence, to an armchair, in which he sat, and they withdrew. The marchioness placed herself on his right hand. The notary drew the contract out of the lettercase, and read it in a loud voice. The marquis and his wife pledged themselves to pay Lectoure five hundred thousand francs, and the like sum to Marguerite as her portion.

Throughout the reading, notwithstanding her apparent impassibility, the marchioness had shown some tokens of disquietude. At the end, as the notary laid the document on the table, the count returned and went up to his mother.

"Marguerite?" she queried.

"She is following me," responded he.

"Madame!" appealed the girl, half opening the door, and wringing her hands.

The marchioness did not seem to hear her, but, pointing to the pen, said,

"It is your place, M. le Baron."

Lectoure walked up to the table, took the pen and signed.

"Madame!" implored Marguerite a second time, making a step towards her mother.

"Pass the pen to your bride, M. de Lectoure," said the old lady.

The baron went around the table to be near Marguerite.

"Madame!" said she, for a third time, with a voice so full of tears that it went to the depth of all hearts, and the marquis himself lifted his head.

"Sign," said the marchioness, pointing to the paper.

"Oh, father, father!" cried Marguerite, flinging herself at the old man's feet.

"What are you doing?" said the marchioness, leaning on the arm of her husband's chair so as to be before him. "Are you mad, mademoiselle?"

"Father, father!" said Marguerite, surrounding the marquis with her arms. "Father, have pity on me! father, save your child!"

"Marguerite!" muttered the marchioness in a terribly menacing tone.

"Madame," replied the young lady, "I cannot address you. Let me, then, beseech my father. Unless," she continued, indicating the notary with a firm and decided gesture, "you prefer my invoking the law!"

"Come, come," said the marchioness with an accent of bitter irony, as she rose, "this is a family difference, and such scenes, though very affecting to the grand-parents, are in general

rather insipid to strangers. Gentlemen, you will find refreshments in the adjoining rooms. My son, do the honours. Pray overlook this, M. le Baron."

Emmanuel and Lectoure bowed in silence and retired, followed by the whole assemblage. The marchioness remained motionless until the last guest had gone out, whereupon she went and closed the doors, returning to the marquis, whom Marguerite still embraced, to say:

"Now that there are none here but those who have the right to give you orders, sign, or go forth, mademoiselle!"

"For pity's sake, madame, for pity's sake," said Marguerite, "do not require this shameful deed of me!"

"Did you not hear me?" said the marchioness, giving her voice an imperious accent which it seemed impossible for anybody to resist, "and must I repeat it? Sign, or begone!"

"Oh, father, father," cried out Marguerite, "mercy on me—mercy! No, no, it must not be said that I was torn out of my father's arms at the moment when I saw him again after ten years! and that without his recognising me or embracing me! Father, it is I, your daughter."

"What voice is this imploring me?" murmured the old nobleman. "What girl is this who calls me father?"

"The voice," replied the marchioness, grasping Marguerite's arm, "is one that rises against the rights of nature! the girl is a rebellious daughter!"

"Father!" still appealed Marguerite, "look at me!—save me—defend me! I am your Marguerite."

"Marguerite? Marguerite?" faltered the nobleman. "I once had a child of that name."

"It is I—I!" replied she, "I am your child—I am your daughter."

"The only children are those who obey," said the marchioness. "Obey, and you will have the right to call yourself our daughter."

"Oh, father, you I am ready to obey. But you will not order me to do this! you cannot wish me to be unhappy to the point of despair—ready to die!"

"Come, come," said the marquis, retaining her and pressing her in his arms. "Oh, I feel an unknown and delightful sensation! And now—wait a little, wait!"—he carried his hand to his brow—"I seem to remember——"

"My lord," said the marchioness, "tell her that she should obey—that Heaven curses rebellious children—tell her this rather than encourage her in her impiety."

The marquis slowly raised his head and fixed his burning eyes on his wife.

"Have a care, madame," said he in a slow voice, "have a care! Did I not tell you that I began to remember?" Lowering his head towards Marguerite's, so that his white locks mingled with her black tresses, "Speak, speak," he continued. "What is the matter, my child? Tell me."

"Oh, I am very unfortunate."

"Everybody is, then, unhappy here," exclaimed the marquis. "Black hair and white—youth and old age! Oh, I, too, am very unhappy."

"My lord, go up to your rooms—you must," said the marchioness.

"Yes—to be again face to face with you—shut up like a prisoner! that was wise when I was mad, my lady!"

"Yes, yes, father, you are right. It is a long time that my mother has been devoting herself to you. It is time your daughter should relieve her. Father, take me. I will not leave you, day nor night. You need only lift your finger or say a word for me to serve you."

"You would not have the courage to do this?"

"Yes, I would do it, father, as truly as I am your own child."

The bystander wrung her hands with impatience.

"If you are my daughter," resumed the marquis, "why have I not seen you these ten years?"

"Because I was told that you did not like to see me, and that you did not love me."

"Were you told I did not care to see you, with the angelic face?" cried out the marquis, holding her head between his hands, and lovingly regarding her. "You were told that! that a poor outcast spirit did not aspire to Heaven! Who said that a father did not yearn to see his daughter? who dared to tell a child, 'Child, your father does not love you'?"

"I!" rejoined the marchioness, trying, for the last time, to wrest Marguerite away from her father's arms.

"You," interrupted the marquis, "it was you? Have you, then, received the fatal mandate to deceive me in all my affections? must all my pangs have their source in you? must you break the father's heart to-day as you did the husband's twenty years ago?"

"You are delirious, my lord," said the marchioness, releasing her daughter, and passing to the marquis's right hand. "Silence, silence!"

"No, my lady, I am not delirious!" responded he; "no, no! rather say—it will be the truth—that I am between an angel who wishes to recall me to reason and a fiend who would hurl me back into madness. No, I am no longer out of my senses. Must I prove it to you?" He rose by resting on the arms of the chair. "Must I speak to you of love-letters—that crime of yours—the duel?"

"I tell you," retorted the lady, clutching his arm, "that you are more the outcast from Heaven's grace than ever to speak of such things without thinking of what ears are listening to us. Look round, my lord; see who is here, and dare to tell me that you are not insane."

"You are right," sighed the marquis, falling back in the chair. "Your mother is right," he continued to Marguerite. "It

is I who am insane, and you must believe not what I said, but what your mother says. Your mother is devotion and virtue. So she never has insomnia, remorse, or delirium. What does your mother require?"

"My misery," replied Marguerite, "my everlasting misery."

"How can I prevent this misery?" asked the unhappy old noble, in a heartrending tone. "How can the old man prevent it who madly believes that he always sees blood gushing from a wound—and hears a voice from the tomb?"

"Oh, you can do everything. Say one word, and I will be saved. They want me to marry."

The marquis's head sank back in the chair.

"Hear me out. They want me to marry a man whom I do not love—do you understand? a wretch! and you have been brought here to this chair before this table—you, my father, to sign this infamous paper here, here!—here is the contract."

"Without consulting me?" inquired the noble, taking the document, "without asking of me my yea or nay? Do they believe me dead? But if they believed that, did they fear no spectre? You say this wedding will make your unhappiness?"

"Eternal, eternal!" moaned Marguerite.

"Then this wedding shall not be."

"I have pledged your word and mine," intervened the marchioness, with all the more vehemence as she felt that power was escaping her.

"I tell you, this wedding shall not take place," repeated the noble in a voice drowning hers. "A marriage," he proceeded in a gloomy and cavernous tone, "is too dreadful a thing when the woman does not love her husband—it drives him mad! The marchioness always loved me—loved me faithfully. It was another thing that made me mad."

A flash of infernal glee blazed in the marchioness's eyes, for she marked by the marquis's gaze that his madness was returning.

"This contract?" proceeded he, making ready to tear it, but the marchioness quickly put her hand on it.

Marguerite seemed hanging by a thread between heaven and perdition.

"It is a grave re-opening which maddens me," resumed the marquis, "the spectre rising from the earth to speak to me—to say——"

"'Your days are mine!'" hissed the marchioness in her husband's ear, repeating the last words of the dying Morlaix, "'I shall require them!'"

"Do you hear it? do you hear that?" exclaimed the marquis, trembling dreadfully, and rising as if to flee.

"Father, father, return to us! There's no spectre, no ghost! It was the marchioness who spoke the words."

"'But I want you to live!'" continued the prompter, continuing the scheme commenced,

"'to forgive me as I forgive you.'"

"Mercy, Morlaix, mercy," cried out the nobleman, falling back in the chair, his hair bristling with terror, and perspiration beading his brow.

"Father, father!"

"You see that your father is insane!" said the marchioness triumphantly, "hear him!"

"No," returned Marguerite, "I hope Heaven will perform a miracle. My love, tears and caresses will restore his reason."

"Try it," coldly sneered the marchioness, abandoning to her daughter the old man, voiceless, without will, and almost senseless.

"My father!" said Marguerite, in a heart-rending voice.

The wreck remained unaffected.

"My lord," said the lady, imperatively.

"Eh?" queried the marquis, shuddering.

"Father, father, help me!" implored Marguerite, wringing her hands in despair.

"Take this pen and sign your name," went on the lady, putting the pen in his hand and the hand on the contract. "It must be done. It is my will."

"Oh, now I am lost!" moaned Marguerite, crushed by the struggle which she felt she had no strength to carry farther.

But, at the very moment when the vanquished noble was about to write, the exultant marchioness felicitating herself on her victory, and the desperate Marguerite preparing for a flight, an unexpected incident suddenly changed the face of things. The side door opened and Paul Jones appeared, after having witnessed the scene, invisible himself.

"Madame la Marquise d' Auray," said he, "I want a word with you before that document is signed."

"Who addresses me?" questioned the lady, endeavouring to discern the speaker at a distance, and in the shadow, too.

"I know that voice!" exclaimed the marquis, starting as though touched by a red-hot iron.

Paul came by three steps into the circle of light spread by the chandelier.

"Is it a ghost?" ejaculated the marchioness, struck by the young man's likeness to her girlhood's lover.

"I know the face," moaned the marquis, believing he saw the man again whom he had killed.

"Great Heaven, protect me!" faltered Marguerite, falling on her knees and holding up her hands.

"Morlaix, Morlaix!" said the marquis, rising and staggering towards the sea-captain. "Forgive me! have mercy!"

He pitched forward and fell full length, senseless, on the floor.

"Father!" screamed Marguerite, rushing towards him.

At this juncture a frightened servant came running in, who addressed the lady of the house, saying,

"Madame, Achard is calling

for the priest and our doctor—he is dying!"

"Tell him," replied the marchioness, pointing to the body to which her daughter was uselessly trying to recall life, "tell him that the marquis requires both."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST APPEAL.

By one of those remarkable combinations of Providence which benighted men almost always attribute to chance, there were called from earth, at the same time to render their accounts, the most noble the Marquis d'Auray and the poor Achard.

We have seen the former, struck by the sight of Paul Jones,—living image of his father—fall without consciousness at his feet, frightening him with the terrible effect he had produced.

As for poor Achard, from the same tragedy and situation arose the circumstances, yet with a difference, which brought about his death-gasp.

On both the sight of Paul Jones had caused a fatal effect, on one through an excess of terror, on the other through an excess of joy.

During the day preceding the signature of the contract Achard had felt weaker than usual; still he had as usual gone out in the afternoon to say his prayers over his master's grave. Thence he had viewed, with deeper piety than ever, the always new and splendid sight of the sun setting in the ocean; he had watched the lowering of tones in the empurpled light; and as though this torch of the world drew his soul towards it, he felt his power decline with the last beam, so that when the servant of the castle came in the evening, as was customary, to ask him if he had any orders to give, and did not find him indoors, he set to seeking him elsewhere. As his daily walk was known, he had soon found him at the foot of the great oak, swooned on the mound above his master, faithful to the end to that worship of the grave which had been the exclusive sentiment of his final years. The man had taken him up in his arms and carried him home before he ran, alarmed by the unexpected accident, to claim the succour of the doctor and the priest at the marchioness's, which she had refused under the pretext that it was as much needed by the lord as the cottager, and that, even in a matter of death, the hierarchy of rank gave her husband the primary right to enjoy it.

But Paul had heard this news, announced to the marchioness as it was at the moment of supreme paroxysm into which the different interests and passions threw them all.

Considering the signing of the contract impossible in the marquis's present state, the captain merely delayed to remind Marguerite that he was to be found

at Achard's if she needed him, and sprang away out into the grounds, where he found his way among the winding walks and groups of trees with the skill of a seaman who reads his course in the sky. He reached the lodge, where he entered breathless, as the old man began to recover his senses. Gladness restored him some strength, as he was at least sure of dying on a friendly breast.

"Oh, is it you?" said the old man. "I hoped not to see you any more."

"Did you think that if I knew your condition I should not instantly hasten to you?"

"But I did not know where to send for you to say I would like to see you before I died."

"I was up at the great house, father, whence I ran hither on hearing the news."

"What were you doing up there?" said he, astonished.

The adventurer told him all.

"Providence divine!" ejaculated Achard, "how hidden and inevitable are thy decrees! After a score of years thou hast led the young man back to his childhood's cradle, and by the bare sight of a murdered man's son killed the assassin!"

"Yes, yes, so things come about," went on Paul; "and the same Providence brought me here again to save you; for I know you were refused spiritual and physical comfort."

"In fair justice, we ought to have shared them," rejoined Achard. "Since the marquis fears death, he might have kept the doctor only, and let the priest attend one who is weary of life."

"I can take the horse, and in an hour——"

"An hour will be too late," said the dying man in a weakened voice. "A priest—only a priest—I ask but for the priest."

"Father," said the seaman, "I know I cannot replace him in his holy functions, but we can speak together of our Maker and His greatness and goodness."

"Yes; but let us have done first with things of this life ere turning to Heaven. You say that, like me, the marquis is dying?"

"I left him in the last throes."

"Do you know that as soon as he is no more, the documents in yonder press, which prove your birth, belong to you by right?"

"I know it."

"If I die before him without anyone by, to whom can the charge be confided?"

He sat up and showed a key under his bolster.

"Take this key to open that cupboard; there you will find a small box. You are a man of honour—swear to me that you will not open the box until the marquis is dead."

"I swear it!" answered Paul, solemnly lifting his hand to the crucifix nailed at the head of the bed.

"It is well," sighed Achard, "Now I can die in peace."

"So you may, for the son holds your hand on earth, while his father holds out his unto yours in heaven."

"Do you believe, boy, that he is contented with my fidelity?"

"There never was a king obeyed in his lifetime as he has been after his death."

"Yes," murmured the old man in a gloomy voice, "I have been only too exact in fulfilling his commands. I ought not to have let that duel take place, I might have refused to be a witness. Hearken, Paul; what I would have liked to say to a priest is the one burden on my conscience, my doubt since I looked upon that solitary combat as an assassination. If so, I would not be merely a looker-on, but an accomplice."

"Father," answered the captain, "I do not know whether man-made laws are always in concord with Heaven's, and if honour in the human code is virtue according to our Lord; I know not if the Church, enemy of bloodshed, allows the offended man to avenge an injury on the offender with his own hand, so that it is the divine judgment that directs the bullet or the sword's point. These are questions to be decided by conscience, not reasoning. But my conscience tells me that I should have acted like you in your place. If conscience, deceiving me, has also misled you, I have more right than any other to forgive you; and this I do, in my name and my father's."

"I thank you," cried the old man, pressing the other's hand; "for these are the words the dying yearn after. Remorse is a dreadful thing, mark you! For remorse leads one to doubt Heaven. For, if there be no Judge, there can be no judgment."

"Hear me," replied the rover, with his own peculiar poetical and solemn tone; "I, also, have had my doubts of the Deity. For I was isolated in society, without support or family in the world, and seeking for heavenly support I questioned everything around me for a proof of God's existence. I have often stopped at a roadside cross and begged for a sign of grace, and the unimpressioned emblem made me turn away with despair in my heart, saying: 'If I knew where to find my sire's grave I should question it as Hamlet did the ghost, and perchance a voice there would answer.'"

"Poor boy."

"Then I would go into a church—a Scottish church, dark, plain, cold, yet religious and Christian. I would feel overwhelmed with sadness, but that was not faith. I would kneel and lay my forehead on the marble, and after being prostrated in doubt for hours, I would lift my head in hope that the Light I sought would be manifested by a beam of glory. But the church remained as dark as the cross had remained mute, and I would rush out of the portals like a madman, repining that no comfort had been vouchsafed to me."

"Mind what you say, Paul," said the old man; "let not your doubt add itself to mine! You have time to learn to believe, while I must die."

"Wait, father, wait," continued Paul Jones, with a gentle voice and a calm face, "I have not

finished. Then I said to myself, 'Crosses and churches are the handiwork of man. Let us seek God in His own works! Thenceforward, father, began the errant life which will remain an everlasting mystery between Heaven, the sea, and myself. It led me astray in the wilds of North America, for I thought that the newer the world, the more freshly it would preserve the impress of the Creator's hand. I was not wrong. Often there, in the virgin forests where I had perhaps been the foremost among men to penetrate, my bed the ground, my coverlet the sky, deep dwelling in the one thought, I listened to the thousand sounds of Nature slumbering and aroused. For a long time I was without comprehending the language formed by the blending together of the murmur of the streams, the ripple of the lakes, the rustle of the foliage and the nodding of the flowers. At last, the veil covering my eyes gradually was raised, as well as the weight oppressing my heart. Then I commenced to believe that the eventide sounds, and those of the dawn, were but a universal hymn by which created things offered thanks to the Creator."

"My God," said the dying one, clasping his hands and raising his eyes heavenward with the expression of faith; "I have cried out unto Thee from the depths, and Thou hast heard me in my distress. Oh, God, I thank Thee!"

"Then," went on Paul, with increasing exultation, "I sought on the ocean for that residue of conviction which the earth refused me. The earth is but space; the ocean is immensity, the greatest and strongest and mightiest thing under the Almighty. I have heard it roar like a chafed lion, yet, at the voice of its Master, lie down like a submissive dog; I have felt it raise itself like a Titan endeavouring to scale the sky, yet, under the scourge of the storm, wail like a weeping infant. I have seen it hurl its breakers up to meet the lightning, and seek to drown the thunder-bolt in its spray, yet go down into smoothness like a mirror's, and reflect the minutest star on the firmament. On the earth I have recognised the existence of Divinity; on the ocean, I acknowledged its power. In the loneliness, I heard the still, small Voice; but, in the tempest I had a glimpse of what I dared not dwell upon pass on the clouds. Then, father, then doubt was for ever driven far from me, and on the evening of the first storm I believed and I prayed."

"I believe in the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth," said the old man, in a voice of ardent faith.

Paul listened silently, with upraised eyes, before he remarked, shaking his head,

"A priest would not have spoken thus, for I have spoken just as a seaman does, with a voice more habituated to utter words that give death than those of consolation. Pardon me, father."

"You have prayed, and you believe in your own way. What

you say is plain and grand. Let me think it over."

"Hark!" ejaculated Paul, starting.

"What is it?"

"Did you not hear?"

"Nothing."

"I fancied that a voice in distress—a woman's—was calling me. There, again! don't you hear? it is the voice of Marguerite!"

"Go to her," said the old man. "I have need to be alone."

The sea-captain dashed out into the other room, and, as he set foot in it, he heard his name repeated a third time near the doorway. Running to it, he opened the door eagerly, to find Marguerite on the step, her strength having failed her to go any further, so that she sank on her knees.

"Help, help!" she exclaimed, in the utmost terror, as she perceived Paul, towards whom she began dragging herself.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RIGHTFUL HAND.

PAUL lifted up the pale and ice-cold form, and, carrying it into the outer room, placed it in a large chair. He went back to close the door, and, returning, said,

"What do you fear? who pursues you, and how is it you come at this hour?"

"At any hour of the day or night, I should have fled wherever the ground would bear me," replied Marguerite, "I should have fled until I found a heart to sorrow with me, and an arm to defend me. I must have fled, for, Paul, Paul! my father is dead!"

"Poor girl," returned he, "to escape from one abode of death to another—who leaves the dead master in the castle and finds the dead servant in the cot."

"Yes, yes," she said, rising, still shivering with fright, and pressing against the captain, "death is there, and death is here. But there it was death in despair, while here it is in tranquility. Oh, Paul, Paul, had you but seen what I have seen."

"Tell me it."

"You know," continued the fugitive, "what a dread influence your voice and presence had over my father."

"I know."

"He was carried speechless and swooning to his rooms."

"It was to your mother that I spoke," rejoined the captain; "it was no fault of mine that he overheard me."

"But you understand, Paul, because you must have heard all in the closet where you were. My father—my poor father had recognised me; seeing him in such a state, I could not resist my uneasiness, and, at the risk of irritating my mother, I went up to see him once more. The door was closed, I knocked softly, since he had come to his senses, for I heard his weakened voice ask who it was."

"But your mother?"

"She was absent; she had locked him up in there on her going out, as you would a child. But when he recognised my voice, and I answered that I was, indeed Marguerite, his daughter, he told me to come round by a secret staircase leading into a closet of his chamber. In a minute afterwards I was on my knees by his bedside, and he gave me his blessing. Yes, I have had his blessing before dying, one which, I hope, will earn me that of Heaven."

"Yes," said Paul, "be easy, your offence will be pardoned, so far as it is one. Weep over your father, but no more for yourself, for you are safe, and will be happy."

"You have heard nothing yet, Paul. Listen! listen!"

"Speak."

"I had been for a space kneeling and kissing his hand when I heard my mother's footsteps on the stairs. I recognised her voice, and so did my father, for he embraced me for the last time, and waved his hand for me to flee. I obeyed, but my head was so troubled and bewildered that I mistook the door, and, instead of that of the staircase closet by which I had come I opened that of a cabinet without an issue. I groped all about it and found that I was walled in. At this moment the room door opened. I stopped and held my breath. My mother entered with the chaplain. I tell you, Paul, she was paler than he who was dying."

"Great Heavens!" muttered the adventurer.

"The priest sat on the bedside," continued Marguerite, pressing against the young seaman in greater fright. "My mother stood at the foot. Can you understand how I felt, facing this funereal sight, unable to go away? A daughter forced to hear the deathbed confession of her father! Is it not dreadful? I fell on my knees, closing my eyes not to see anything—praying not to hear; and yet, in spite of myself, I did see and hear what will never leave my mind. I beheld my father, recovering in remembrance a feverish force, sitting up in bed with a deadly pallor upon his face. I heard him speak of a duel, a wife's crime, a murder! at each word I saw my mother ever more pale, and I heard her raising her voice, drowning that of the dying one, telling the priest, 'Do not believe him, Father, do not believe him! he lies!' or, else, 'It's a mad man! do not believe him!' Paul, it was a horrible sight—impious and sacrilegious! A cold breath chilled my forehead, and I fainted away."

"Justice of Heaven!" ejaculated the captain.

"I do not know how long a time I remained without consciousness. When I did return to life the room was silent as the grave. My mother and our chaplain had disappeared, leaving two tapers burning by my father. I opened the door, and cast my eyes upon the bed, where it seemed to me I could discern the rigid outlines of a corpse under the sheet entirely covering it. All was over! I stood motionless, divided between the fear caused by the sight and the pious desire to raise the shroud and once more kiss my venerable father's forehead before he was sealed up in the bier. But fear overpowered me; an invincible, glacial terror urged me out of the room; I ran down the stairs without knowing how—not feeling that I touched them; I traversed rooms, galleries, corridors, till I felt by the coolness of the air that I was outdoors. I still ran like a mad woman, I remembered your telling me that you would be here. An instinct—tell me how that is, for I cannot understand it myself—drove me hither. I seemed to be pursued by phantoms and shadows. At the turn

of a garden path — was I insane? — I fancied I saw my mother — all in black — stealing along noiselessly, like a spectre, and then terror gave me wings. I ran at first without keeping to the path, but my powers failed me, and it was then you heard my calls. I went a little farther and fell at this door. If it had not been opened to me, oh! I should have expired there, for I was so distressed that it still seemed to me — Hush!" she interrupted herself, "do you hear?"

"Yes," whispered Paul, blowing out the lamp, "yes, yes, steps! I hear them as well as you."

"Look, look!" continued Marguerite, wrapping herself up in the window-curtains, and concealing her defender at the same time. "Look! I was not mistaken. It is she."

Indeed, the cottage door opened at that moment, and the marchioness, draped in black, pale as a ghost, slowly came in, drew the door to behind her, turned the key, and, without seeing the two bystanders, crossed the first room and entered the second, where the old man was lying. She glided up to Achard's bed as she had approached the marquis's; but this time she had no priest with her.

"Who's there?" demanded Achard, drawing one of the bed curtains.

"I!" responded the lady, pulling back the other.

"You, my lady!" uttered the old servant, with alarm. "What do you come to do by a death-bed?"

"I come to propose a bargain."

"To take my soul?"

"To save it, rather. Achard, you need but one thing in this world," she continued, leaning over the bed, "and that's a holy comforter."

"You refused me the chaplain."

"If you like," said the lady, "you can have him here in five minutes."

"Call him, then," replied the old man, "without loss of time; believe me, hasten."

"But, if I give you peace in Heaven, will you give me peace on earth?" she inquired.

"What can I do for you?" muttered the dying man, closing his eyes not to see this woman with a frigid gaze that froze him.

"You need a priest ere you die—I need what you know—to live."

"You want me to close the gates of heaven by a perjury."

"I want to open them to you by a pardon."

"I have received pardon."

"From whom?"

"From the only person who, perhaps, had the right to grant it."

"Has Morlaix come down out of heaven?" questioned the marchioness in a tone into which entered almost as much fear as irony.

"No," was the other's reply, "but have you forgotten that he left a son on earth?"

"Have you seen him?" she demanded.

"Yes," rejoined Achard.

"And told him all?"

"All," came the sharp reply.

"And gave him the papers attesting his birth?" went on the lady with anxiety.

"The marquis was not dead. The papers are there."

"Achard," implored the patrician, dropping on her knees beside the couch, "you will have pity on me!"

"Your ladyship on your knees to me!"

"Yes, old man," she said in supplication, "I am on my knees to you, imploring, praying to you, for you hold in your hands the honour of one of the oldest families of France, my past life and that to come. Those papers are my heart, and soul, and more—my name—the name of my fore-fathers and my children; and you know what I have undergone to keep that name spotless! Do you believe that I did not, like other women, cherish the feelings in my bosom of pride, wife and mother? Well, I had them, but I stifled them one after another, in a long, long struggle. I am twenty years younger than you, old man; I am full of life, and you are dying—but look at my hair! it is whiter than yours."

"What does she say?" murmured Marguerite, who had approached the inner door so that she could look into the other room. "Oh, goodness!"

"List, list, girl," said Paul; "thus it is that Heaven allows all to be revealed."

"Yes, yes," said Achard, growing weaker, "you doubted the goodness of Heaven, and forgot that the woman taken in adultery was forgiven."

"She has not the Protector now, and men cast the stones! For twenty generations men have become habituated to respect my name and honour my family and, if they were to learn what, Heaven be thanked! has been concealed from them up to the present, they would have nothing but shame and contempt for me. God knoweth that I have suffered enough to be forgiven by Him, but men are implacable, and they never forgive! Besides, am I alone exposed to their insults? Do I not stand between two sons?—the unrecognised one the elder? He is my child as much as Emmanuel and Marguerite, but have I the right to give him to them as brother? Do you forget that he is the son of the Marquis d'Auray in the eyes of the law? do you forget that he is the first-born and head of the family? that all belongs to him—title and fortune, and he has only to invoke the law? Then what would be left for Emmanuel? — a knighthood of Malta!—what for Marguerite? —the nunnery!"

"Yes," said Marguerite, in an undertone, holding out her arms to the speaker; "yes, a nunnery where I might pray for you, mother."

"Silence, silence!" whispered Paul.

"Oh, you do not know what manner of man he is," muttered the dying one in a voice each time more enfeebled.

"No, but I know what mankind is. He may take a name, being nameless, and wealth, being poor—and do you imagine that he would forego this name and wealth?"

"If you were to ask him."

"By what right could I ask him that?" pursued the lady. "How beg him to spare me, Emmanuel, and Marguerite? He would say, 'Woman, I know you not! I have never seen you. All I know is that you are my mother.'"

"In his name," stammered Achard, whose tongue was beginning to be chilled by death, "I pledge, I vow—oh, Heaven!"

The marchioness rose to watch the progress of the last struggle on the dying man's face.

"You pledge?" she said. "But is he at hand to ratify the engagement? You swear? On your word am I to stake the years left me to live against the minutes remaining to you to die? I have entreated you and besought you—for a last time I implore, 'Return me the papers.'"

"They belong to him."

"I must have them, I tell you," continued the marchioness, taking the upper hand in proportion to the cottager's weakening.

"Heaven, have pity on me!" moaned he.

"Nobody can come. You said the key never left you."

"Would you snatch it from a dying hand?"

"No," returned the marchioness; "I will wait."

"Let me die in peace!" exclaimed the man, tearing the crucifix off the wall and holding it between them. "Begone, in the name of all that is holy!"

The lady fell on her knees, bending her head almost to the floor. He remained for a space in that attitude, but his powers abandoned him, so that he fell back on the bed with folded arms, the cross resting on his breast.

The marchioness caught hold of the bed curtains at the hem, and, without elevating her head, drew them together to shut in the last moments.

"Horror, horror!" groaned Marguerite.

"On your kness and pray!" said Paul.

Then passed a solemn and awful moment, only interrupted by the last gasps of the old man; they sounded fainter and fainter, and ceased. All was over: old Trusty was dead.

The marchioness slowly lifted her head, listened for a while in anxiety, and thrusting her hand through the curtains without opening them, she managed, after several trials, to draw it out holding the key. She rose in silence and walked over to the clothes-press with her head turned towards the bed. But at the moment she was going to insert the key into the lock Paul, who had followed all her movements, darted into the room, and, gripping her arm, said,

"Mother, give me that key, for the marquis is dead and the papers are mine."

"Justice of Heaven! It is his son!" shrieked the marchioness, recoiling with fright and falling on a chair.

"Goodness of Heaven!" murmured Marguerite, as she sank on her knees in the other room, "it is my brother!"

Captain Jones opened the press and took out the casket in which the papers were enclosed.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HARDENED HEART.

AMID all the hurried events of that night which, while making Marguerite witness of dying scenes, had brought her so providentially to the discovery of her mother's secret, Paul Jones had not forgotten the challenge given by him to Lectoure.

As that young noble would no doubt be unable to find him, he considered he ought to spare him the pains of a search, and, about six o'clock in the morning, Lieutenant Walters presented himself at the Château of Auray, coming on behalf of his commander to settle the conditions of the meeting. He found the count in Lectoure's rooms.

On perceiving the naval officer, the latter went down into the grounds to leave the young gentlemen entirely free in their discussion. Walters had received from his superior the order to accept everything, so that the preliminary debate was promptly terminated. It was agreed that the encounter should take place at four the same afternoon, on the seashore, near the fisher's cottage, situated between Port Louis and the Château of Auray. Both swords and pistols were to be taken to the ground, where the decision was to be made as to which the adversaries should use, it being understood, of course, that Lectoure, being the insulted party, had the choice.

The marchioness, crushed at first by the intervention of her eldest-born, had soon recovered her firmness of character, and, drawing her veil over her face, she had left the dead-room and gone out through the other, where there was no light. Consequently she had not perceived the kneeling girl, mute with terror and astonishment. Next she had crossed the park and returned into the drawing-room, where the contract was to have been signed. There she had spent the rest of the night, by the candles' waning gleams, leaning her head on her hands, and her elbows on the table, her eyes fastened on the paper whereon Lectoure had already written his name and the marquis had partly written his. She matured a new plan. Day broke without her thinking of taking the least repose, so well did that spirit of bronze sustain the body which comprised it. This resolution was to send Emmanuel and Marguerite far from home as quickly as

possible, for it was chiefly from her children that she wished to conceal what would probably occur between Paul and her.

At seven o'clock, hearing the stir attending the departure of Lieutenant Walters, she put her hand to a bell and rang. A footman came to the door in the gala livery of overnight, which showed that he had been sitting up also.

"Acquaint Mdlle. d'Auray with her mother's desire to see her in the drawing-room," said the marchioness.

The lackey obeyed, and the lady resumed her previous attitude, dull and motionless. Shortly afterwards she heard a slight sound behind her, and turned round. It was Marguerite.

With more respect than ever before, perhaps, she held out her hand towards her mother's, in order to take hers to kiss. But the marchioness remained without movement, as though she did not understand the action. Marguerite let her hand drop, and waited in silence.

She also was dressed as on the night before. Sleep had fallen on all the world save the dwellers in the Château of Auray.

"Draw near," said the lady.

Marguerite took a step forward.

"Why are you so pale and trembling?"

"Madame!" faltered Marguerite.

"Speak," said the other.

"The death of my father so sharp and unexpected," said the young lady. "In short, I have suffered a great deal in the night."

"Yes, yes," said the marchioness, in a hollow voice, fixing a glance on her daughter, not devoid of all interest; "the young tree sways and loses its leaves in the wind. It is only the old oak which withstands the storm. Marguerite, I also have suffered and had a dreadful night; yet you see me calm and firm."

"You were given a strong, stern spirit, madame; but the same strength and sternness must not be looked for in others. You will shatter them."

"That is the reason," retorted the marchioness, letting her hand fall on the table, "why I ask only obedience from yours. Marguerite, the marquis is dead. Emmanuel is now head of the house. You are to depart at once for Rennes with him."

"I!" said Marguerite, "I am to go to Rennes? Why?"

"Because," returned the grim dame, "our chapel is too small to hold at the same time the father's funeral and the daughter's betrothal."

"Mother," said the girl with an undefinable tone, "methinks it would be piety to put a longer interval between two ceremonies so opposite."

"Real piety lies in fulfilling the last wishes of the dead," answered the marchioness. "Cast your eyes on this contract, and see there the first letters of your father's name."

"But I ask you, madame, if my father had all his reason and will when he traced those letters before death came to interrupt?"

"I do not know, mademoiselle," rejoined the other, in that icy and imperative tone which

had hitherto made those around her submit; "but I know that the influence survives which made him act; and that parents, while they exist, represent the Parent of all on the earth. From above has come the order for terrible deeds, and I have obeyed. Do as I did, mademoiselle—obey!"

"Madame," said the girl, upright but quiet, with some ring of the steady tone so terrible in her mother, no doubt transmitted in the blood, "three days, with tears in my eyes and despair in my heart, I went down on my knees to Emmanuel, and to his friend, and to my father. None would or could listen to me, for ardent ambition or incarnate madness were there to smother my voice. Finally, I come to you, my mother, the last to whom I can implore, but you are also the one most fit to hear me. Therefore, heed me well in what I am going to say. If I had only my happiness to sacrifice to your will, I should sacrifice it; so with a love solely on my part; but I am not going to sacrifice the love and happiness of another. You must once have known such feelings as mine."

"I were, then, none the less, to be blamed," muttered the marchioness.

"In short, when the man speaks who has received from Heaven a voice which finds an echo in our heart, and that voice contradicts the one from birth already there, which one should be obeyed?"

"You will never hear the voice of your lover," remarked the marchioness, "for you will never see him again."

"Who can answer for that?"

"He will not know where you are, in his exile."

"But if he leaves some day?" demanded Marguerite, her filial respect overcome by her mother's harshness, "and comes back to ask an account of my broken promises?—it may happen, madame."

She took up the pen.

"In that case, tell me, must I sign this?"

"Sign," said the marchioness.

"But," resumed Marguerite, resting her clenched and tremulous hand on the contract, "if my husband should some day learn of his rival's existence, and demand satisfaction for his return near his old flame to stain his name and honour; if in a fierce duel, without seconds, he kills the lover, and, tormented by his conscience, pursued by a voice out of the grave, my husband should lose his reason——"

"Be silent!" cried the frightened marchioness, though she did not yet know whether chance or some secret revelation dictated the words.

"Would you, then," went on Marguerite, who had said too much to stop now, "to preserve my name pure and spotless, have me shut myself up with a lunatic? keep all loving souls aloof from him and myself, steel my heart so as to feel nothing, and my eyes not to weep? Would you have me wear mourning for my lover, but like a widow, though my husband were not dead, and my hair

grow white twenty years before the time?"

"Silence, silence!" interrupted the marchioness in a voice which betrayed that threatening was giving way to fear.

"To have the dread secret die with the holders," proceeded Marguerite, carried away by the bitterness of her grief, "would you have me keep doctors and priests from the deathbed! Would you have me go from one dying man to another to close, not their eyes, but their mouths?"

"Silence!" groaned the hearer, wringing her hands, "in Heaven's name, be silent!"

"Tell me still to sign, mother, and all that will come to pass," said Marguerite. "And then the holy malediction will be accomplished of the sins of the father being visited on to the third and the fourth generations!"

"Oh, Heaven, Heaven!" moaned the marchioness, bursting into sobs, "am I not sufficiently abased? Am I not sufficiently punished?"

"Forgive me, mother," exclaimed Marguerite, recalled to herself by the first tears, and falling on her knees.

"Forgiveness, yes," responded the marchioness, walking over to Marguerite, "yes, ask it, unnatural girl, who took the scourge of eternal vengeance from God's hands and lashed your own mother across the face!"

"Mercy, mercy! I did not know what I was saying, mother! You drove me out of my mind! I was mad!"

"Oh, Lord of Lords," said the lady, raising her hands over her daughter's head, "Thou hast heard the words issued from my child's mouth. I dare not hope that in Thy mercifulness they will be obliterated, but, when the hour comes for punishment, remember Thou that I did not curse her!"

Thereupon she proceeded towards the door. Her daughter sought to stay her, but she turned on her with so terrifying a look that, without any need to order her, Marguerite released the hem of her mother's dress and remained, voiceless and panting, with her arms outstretched until the marchioness was gone. As soon as she had ceased to see her, she fell back with so doleful a scream that one would have believed the long-suffering soul had broken at last.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAIN AND ABEL REVERSED.

OUR readers may be astonished that, after the outrageous manner in which Captain Jones had provoked the Baron de Lectoure overnight, the duel was not fixed for the next morning; but Lieutenant Walters, who was charged to make the arrangements with the Count d'Auray, had, as seen, received from his principal power to make all concessions but one: the sea-captain would not fight till the day's end.

This arose from his consciousness that, until he should have severed the Gordian knot of the weird tragedy in which, at first thrust as a stranger, he was set as the head of the family, his life did not belong to him, and he had no right to risk it. However, the delay he granted himself was not a long one, and Lectoure, who was ignorant in what design his adversary had reserved it, had accepted it without too much remonstrance.

Captain Jones had, therefore, resolved to put the instants to profit. As soon as he believed the proper hour had come for a visit to the marchioness, he made his way towards the *château.*

Recent events had spread so great a trouble in the noble residence that he entered without meeting a servant to be his usher; nevertheless, he went through the rooms on the road he had twice before taken, till, arriving at the drawing-room door, he came upon Marguerite swooning.

On seeing the crumpled-up contract on the table, the intruder readily divined that a more terrible dispute than ever had happened between mother and daughter. He went to his sister, took her up and opened the window partly to give her air. Her state was rather a simple prostration of strength than a real swoon. Hence, as soon as she felt relief from an attention leaving no doubt on the sentiments of her helper, she opened her eyes and recognised her half-brother — that human providence sent to sustain her every time she felt overcome.

Marguerite related to him how her mother had tried by force to have her sign the contract and go away with her brother; and how, vanquished by sorrow, and carried away by the strain, she had let her mother see that she knew everything.

The captain understood what the marchioness must now be suffering at heart, from seeing, after twenty years' silence, isolation and anguish, her secret revealed, without her ability to divine how it had occurred, to one of the two persons from whom it was of the utmost consequence to keep it hid.

Feeling pity for his mother's pain, he resolved to end it as soon as possible by hurrying on the interview which would enlighten her on the intentions of the son whose return she had done all she could to neutralize.

On her part, Marguerite had her pardon to obtain, and she undertook to inform her mother that the captain was waiting to see her.

Paul Jones was left alone, leaning his back against the lofty mantelpiece above which was carved the coat-of-arms of his family, and was lost in thoughts created in him by the crowded events which made him the sovereign arbitrator of this house, when the lateral door opened and Emmanuel appeared with a pistol-case in his hand.

The captain turned his eyes on him and nodded to him with the sweet, brotherly expression which the gentle serenity of his soul reflected on his countenance.

On the other hand, Emmanuel, while answering to the salute etiquette required, showed on his features the hostile feeling aroused in him by the presence of the man he regarded as a fierce personal enemy.

"I was looking for you, monsieur," said the count, laying the pistol-case on the table, and stopping at a short distance from the intruder, "although I had no clear idea where to find you; for, like the evil spirits of our popular traditions, you seem to have received the gift to be everywhere and yet nowhere. However, a servant informed me that he had seen you enter the house. I thank you for having spared me the trouble I intended to put myself to by coming, this time, to anticipate me."

"I am happy," returned Captain Jones, "to have an idea in harmony with yours, though probably inspired by different causes. I am here. What do you want of me?"

"Can you not guess?" replied the noble with growing emotion. "In that case—at which allow my astonishment—you very poorly understand the duties of an officer and a gentleman, and you inflict an additional insult on me!"

"Believe me, Emmanuel——" began Paul, in a calm voice.

"Yesterday, I was entitled the Count d'Auray—to-day I am the Marquis d'Auray," interrupted Emmanuel, tossing his head in a haughty and scornful manner. "Do not forget it, monsieur."

An almost imperceptible smile flitted over the other's lips.

"I was saying," went on the new marquis, "that you little understand the feelings of a gentleman if you fancy that any-

body but I, myself, can settle the quarrel you came to pick with me. Yes, it was you who came across my path, and not I who went to meet you."

"M. le Marquis d'Auray," said Paul, smiling, "forgets his visit on board the *Indienne*."

"A truce to triflings, and come to the point. Yesterday, when I offered you what any officer and gentleman—any man with courage, I should say, would have instantly accepted without wavering, you refused, and, shifting the provocation, you pitched upon an adversary behind me, not exactly a stranger to the quarrel, but one whom good taste forbade being mixed up with it."

"In that, my lord," responded the captain, with the same calmness and freedom of spirit shown all along, "I obeyed exigencies, which did not leave me the choice of adversary. You offered me a duel, but I could not accept you as an opponent, while the meeting became a matter of indifference with anybody else. I have been too much in the habit of hand-to-hand fights, my lord, quite otherwise deadly and terrible to what regulated combats of honour are, for such a one to be anything but matter of course, in my adventurous days. Only, remember that it is not I who sought this duel, but you who came to offer it, and that, unable to fight with you, as I refused, I selected the Baron de Lectoure as I would have done your neighbour, de Nozay, or de Lajarry, because he was at hand, and, if I was fated to kill somebody—I preferred to kill a useless and insolent coxcomb rather than an honest country squire who would have believed himself dishonoured if, even in a dream, he accomplished the infamous match the Baron de Lectoure proposed to you in reality."

"How pretty!" sneered Emmanuel, laughing. "Continue to pose as redresser of wrongs, institute yourself knight defender of oppressed princesses, and shield yourself under the fantastic buckler of your mysterious responses. So long as this superannuated Don Quixotism does not come to clash with my desires, interests, and engagements, I would let it ramble over land and sea, from the one pole to the other, with a contented smile, as I saw it go by; but as soon as this folly comes to attack me, as yours has done—as soon as I meet, in the bosom of the family where I am chief, a stranger who gives orders like a master, where I alone have the right to speak out—I go to him as I do to you, having the pleasure of meeting you alone, and certain thus that no one can come to disturb us before the end of a necessary explanation, I say,

"'You have wounded me if you have not insulted me by intruding here to run counter to my interests and family affections. Hence, you should fight with me and nobody else, and fight you must!'"

"You are mistaken, Emmanuel," responded the captain; "at least, with you I shall not fight. The thing is out of the question."

"The time for enigmas has passed," cried Emmanuel, in impatience; "we live in a world where we jostle reality at every step. So, leave poetics and the mysterious to authors of romances and tragedies. Your presence under my roof has been marked by quite mournful circumstances, enough for no more to be added by us. Lusignan returned to France in the teeth of the order condemning him to transportation; my sister, for the first time, rebellious to her mother's will; my father killed by your presence alone—such are the misfortunes accompanying your return from the other side of the world as a funeral train, and compelling me to call you to account for them. So, speak out, like a man to a man, in the open, face to face, and not like a ghost gliding about in the shadows, escaping by favour of the night, and dropping mutterings of the other world, solemn and prophetic, good to scare nurses and children! Speak, speak! Come, come, I am calm. If you have any revelation to make to me, I listen."

"The secret you ask of me does not belong to me," replied the adventurer, whose calmness still contrasted with his opponent's excitement. "Believe what I say, and do not farther insist. Farewell!"

So saying, he made a movement to retire.

"Stay!" shouted the nobleman, leaping towards the doorway and blocking the passage, "you are not going to get away thus! I hold you, man to man, in this room, where I did not decoy you, for you came of your own accord. So, heed what I am going to say. You insulted me—and it is I to whom you owe reparation. You shall fight with me!"

"You are mad, my lord," responded the captain. "I have already told you that was impossible. Let me go."

"Have a care," cried the noble, stretching out his hand to the case and taking the brace of pistols out, "have a care! After having done all in the world to force you to act like a gentleman, I may treat you as a robber! you are here in a house where you have no business, having stolen in I know not how or where. If you have not come to take money and jewels of ours, you have done so to deprive a mother of her daughter's obedience, and the sacred promise of a friend to another. In either case you are a thief whom I meet at the moment when he lays his hand on a treasure—honour, most precious of all. So, take this weapon, and, as the best thing you can do, defend yourself."

Emmanuel flung one of the firearms at the feet of his opponent.

"You may kill me," replied the rover, leaning his elbow against the chimney-piece as if he were continuing an ordinary conversation, "although I do not think Heaven will permit so great a crime; but you cannot force me to fight with you. I told you so before and I repeat it."

"Pick up that pistol," said Emmanuel, "pick it up, I tell

you! If you believe the menace I made is a vain menace—undeceive yourself. You have wearied out my patience in these three days! you have filled my heart with gall and hatred! in that time, in short, I have become familiarized with all the means by which I might rid myself of you; duel or murder! Do not believe that the fear of punishment will check me—this house is lonely, mute and dumb. Yonder is the sea, and you will hardly be under the ground before I shall be in England. So, for the last time of all, pick up that pistol and defend yourself."

Without answering, Captain Jones spurned the weapon with his foot.

"Well," snarled Emmanuel, raised to the highest degree of exasperation by his antagonist's coolness, "since you will not defend yourself like a man, die like a dog!"

He levelled the pistol at the captain's breast. At the same instant a terrible scream resounded at the door, where Marguerite, returning, saw and comprehended all at the first glance. She sprang towards her brother, at the same time as the shot was fired; but the bullet, thrown out of line by the girl's action, passed two or three inches above the living target and broke the looking-glass over the fireplace behind.

"Brother!" ejaculated Marguerite as she reached Paul in another bound and took him in her arms; "are you wounded, my brother?"

"Brother?" repeated Emmanuel, letting the smoking pistol fall, "your brother?"

"Now, Emmanuel," observed Paul, with the unruffled calm he had shown throughout the scene, "do you understand why I could not fight with you?"

At this emergency the marchioness came to the door, but stopped on the sill, pale as a spectre, looking around her with an expression of illimitable terror. Seeing that nobody was hurt, she silently lifted her eyes heavenward as if to ask if celestial wrath were appeased. For some time she kept them fixed in her unspoken thankfulness. When she lowered them, Emmanuel and Marguerite were at her feet, each holding one of her hands and covering it with tears and kisses.

"I thank you, my children," said the lady, after a pause; "now, leave me alone with this young man."

The two d'Aurays bowed in the utmost respect and obeyed their mother's order.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LAST STAY.

THE marchioness closed the door after them, and went without looking at the captain, to lean on the arm-chair in which the dead marquis had been seated on the night previous to sign the contract. She remained standing with her eyes lowered to the floor.

Paul felt a longing to go and kneel to her, but there was such sternness on the woman's visage that he repressed the impulse of his heart and dwelt motionless, awaiting. At the end of an instant's chilly silence, the lady spoke.

"You desired to see me, and I have come; to speak to me, and I am listening."

These words left her lips without any movement of hers; the lips fluttered rather than parted, as of those of a marble statue speaking.

"Yes, madame," responded Paul, in a tearful voice; "yes, yes, I have wished to speak to you; the wish came to me for the first time very long ago, and it has never left my heart. My boyish memories oft tormented me when a man. I remember a lady whom I used to see glide up to my cradle, taking her, in my childish dreams, for the guardian angel of youthful years. Since that period, so vivid yet so distant, I have more than once awakened, believe me, with a start, as if I felt a mother's kiss on my brow; seeing nobody near me I have called to that lady, believing she was going away, but would perhaps return at my call. Twenty years I have been calling her, but this is the first time she has answered. Will it be true that, as I have often shuddered, you would have trembled to see me? would you have said nothing to me, as I fear at present?"

"Would I have been wrong to fear your return?" said the marchioness in a hollow voice. "Not till yesterday did you appear, and the dread mystery, which was up to then known to Heaven alone and me, is known to my two children!"

"Is it my fault," said Paul, "if Heaven undertook to reveal it to them? Did I conduct the trembling and weeping Marguerite to her dying father, of whom she besought support, and whose lamentable story she heard? Did I take her to Achard's cottage, whither you followed her? As for Emmanuel, the shot you heard and that shivered glass prove that I would rather die than save my

life at the expense of your secret. No, no, believe me, madame, I am the instrument and not the power—the effect and not the cause. No, madame, it is God who in His infinite providence hath brought all about so that you should have at your feet, as you just saw, the two children whom you have so long deprived of your embraces!"

"But there is a third one," said the marchioness, in a voice in which some emotion began to mingle, "and I do not know what I ought to expect of him."

"Leave him to accomplish a last duty, madame; and, that done, he will wait for your orders."

"What is this duty?"

"To restore to his brother the rank to which he has a right, to his sister the happiness she lost, and to his mother the unattainable tranquility which she implores."

"Notwithstanding this," observed the astonished marchioness, "thanks to you, the prime minister has refused the Baron de Lectoure the regiment he craved for my son."

"Because," replied Paul Jones, taking the commission out of his pocket and laying it on the table, "because the king granted it to me for my brother."

The lady cast her eyes upon it and, indeed, saw the name of Emmanuel.

"And yet," she proceeded, "you want to give Marguerite to a nameless fellow without money and, what is worse, an exile."

"You are mistaken, madame, I want to give her to the man she loves, not to Lusignan the exile, but the Baron Anatole de Lusignan, governor for His Majesty of the Island of Guadaloupe. This is his appointment."

With a second glance on this parchment she saw that, as before, he spoke the truth.

"Yes, I admit that you have satisfied the ambition of Emmanuel, and the happiness of Marguerite."

"And gained you tranquility at the same time, madame, for Emmanuel will join his regiment, and Marguerite will go away with her husband, so that you will remain alone, alas! as you have so many times desired."

The marchioness sighed.

"Is it not so, madame? am I wrong?" questioned Paul.

"But how can I disengage myself of this Baron de Lectoure?"

"The marquis is dead. Is not the death of a husband or father sufficient cause for the adjournment of a marriage?"

As the only answer, the marchioness sat down in the armchair, took pen and paper, dashed off a few lines, folded the note up and, putting the name of the Baron de Lectoure for address, she rang for a servant. After a few seconds' delay, during which both kept silence, a footman appeared.

"Within two hours, let the

Baron de Lectoure have this note," she said.

The lackey took the letter, and left the room.

"Now," said the lady, regarding her son, "you who have done justice to the innocent, do mercy to the guilty. You have the papers which prove your birth; you are the elder born; according to the law, at any rate, you have a right to the name and fortune of Emmanuel and Marguerite. What would you claim in exchange for those papers?"

Paul took them out of his pocket, and held them over the flame in the fireplace.

"Allow me once to call you my mother, and call me, for once, your son."

"Is this possible?" exclaimed the marchioness, rising.

"You talk of rank, title, fortune!" continued the adventurer, shaking his head with profound melancholy; "what need have I of them? I have made myself rank to which few men of my youth have climbed; I have won a name which is the blessed of one people, and the terror of their foes; I could, if I liked, pile up a treasure which a king would gladly have bequeathed to him. What are your name, rank, and fortune, then, to me, if you have nothing else to offer, and do not give me what I have wanted always and everywhere—what I cannot create, what Heaven granted me, and misfortune took away—what you alone can restore to me—a mother?"

"My son," uttered the proud one, overcome by this tearful tone; "my boy, my boy!"

"Ha!" shouted Paul, letting the papers drop into the blaze, which reduced them to nothing on the instant, "ha! that expected outcry issued from your heart indeed—that I besought and craved! God be thanked!"

The lady had sunk back, seated, and the lost son knelt before her, hiding his face on his chest.

"Look at me," she said, finally raising his head. "Since twenty years, these are the first tears which have flowed from my eyes. Give me your hand."

She laid it over her heart.

"Since twenty years this is the first feeling of gladness which has made my heart thrill. Come to my arms! Since twenty years this is the first caress I have given and received. No doubt, these twenty years were my expiation, since Heaven has given me—nay, renewed tears, joy, and caresses. I thank Thee, God! I thank you, my son."

"Mother!" said Paul.

"And I shrank from seeing you—I trembled! I did not know what feelings slumbered in my own heart. Oh, I bless you! I bless you!"

At this moment, the chapel bell was audible. The lady started, The funeral hour had arrived. Simultaneously the bodies of the most noble Marquis d'Auray and poor Achard were to be consigned to the earth. The marchioness arose.

"This hour ought to be consecrated to prayer," she observed. "I will retire."

"I sail to-morrow," said the captain. "Shall I not see you again?"

"Oh, yes, yes," she cried. "Indeed, I wish to see you again!"

"Mother, I will be this evening at the park gates. There is a spot sacred to me to which I must pay a last visit. I will await you there, where we ought to say farewell."

"I will go," was her answer.

"Here, mother, take this appointment and commission—one for Emmanuel, the other for Marguerite's husband. Let the happiness of your children come from you! believe me, it will still be to me that you have given most."

The marchioness went to shut herself in the oratory, while her son left the house and proceeded to the fisherman's cabin, where we have previously seen him, and where he had fixed the meeting with Lectoure. He found Lusignan and Walters there.

At the appointed hour Lectoure rode up, looking around for some clue to the proper direction, as he was without guide, and the groom accompanying him was as much a stranger to the locality. On seeing him, the young men came out of the hut. The horseman caught sight of them, and spurred straight towards them. As soon as he was reasonably near, he alighted and threw the bridle on his man's arm.

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen," he said, approaching those who awaited him, "for my arriving alone like an army vedette, but the hour chosen by this gentleman," bowing to Captain Jones, who returned his salutation, "was the very one fixed for the marquis's funeral. So I left the new lord to fulfil his duties of a son, and I came without seconds, hoping to have an adversary generous enough to lend me one of his."

"We are at your disposal," replied the captain; "there are my two seconds. Choose, and the one you honour with your choice will instantly become yours."

"I vow I have no preference," responded Lectoure; "you, yourself, please, designate the one to do me the service."

"Walters," said the privateersman, "pass over to the baron's side."

The lieutenant obeying, the two principals saluted a second time.

"Now," proceeded the captain, "permit me, before our respective seconds, to address you a few words, not of excuse, but explanation."

"Do so, monsieur," acquiesced the baron.

"When I used the words to you which bring you here, the events happening yesterday were yet hidden in the future; it was uncertain, then, and might have brought the misfortune of a whole family. On your side you had the Marchioness d'Auray, the new marquis and the late one; Mdlle. d'Auray had, for her cause, myself alone. Hence all the chances were for you. That is why I challenged you directly, for, if I fell in fight, yet through circumstances which would remain eternally unknown to you, the young lady could never wed you; if I killed you,

the matter would be further simplified, and have no need of comments."

"No exordium could be more logical," replied the courtier, dusting his coat with a flick or two of his riding-whip; "pray pass on to the body of the discourse."

"All is changed, now," pursued the captain, slightly nodding in token of adhesion, "the marquis is dead, his son has his commission as lieutenant, the marchioness renounces the alliance with you, however honourable, and her daughter marries the Baron Anatole de Lusignan, whom, for this reason, I did not give to you as second."

"Ah," said Lectoure, "this, then, is the meaning of the note handed me by a servant as I left the *château*. I was dull enough to take it merely for a postponement; it appears to be a dismissal in good form. Very well, monsieur; I await the peroration."

"It is as frank and simple as the explanation. I did not know you, and had no desire to know you. Chance led us face to face with different interests, and we came into contact. Then, as I stated, distrusting destiny, I wanted to come to its aid. At present, matters are at the point that your death or mine is perfectly immaterial, and would only add a little bloodspilling to the last scene in the drama. Frankly, monsieur, do you believe it worth while to shed any?"

"Perhaps I should be of your opinion," responded Lectoure, "if I had not had to make so long a journey. Not having the honour to wed Mdlle. d'Auray, I seek, at least, the pleasure of crossing swords with you, so that it cannot be said that I got nothing by going into Brittany. Whenever you like, monsieur," he concluded, drawing his sword and saluting his adversary with it.

"Ready!" replied the adventurer, with the same politeness, and imitating him in all points.

With one step they came up so as to cross the blades; at the third pass Lectoure's weapon was sent twenty paces from him.

"Before we drew swords," said the victor, "I offered an explanation. Now, I shall be happy if you will accept my excuses."

"This time I will accept them," rejoined Lectoure, with the same jauntiness as though nothing had happened. "Pick up my sword, Dick," to his man, from whose hands he took it, and he sheathed it. "Now, gentlemen, if any of you have commissions in town, I am going there straightway."

"Tell the king," said Paul, bowing, as he restored his sword to the scabbard, "that I am happy to have the blade, given me to fight his enemies, remain pure of the blood of one of his subjects and countrymen."

The two bowed again. Lectoure mounted his horse and took the Vannes road when a hundred paces from the strand, whilst his servant returned to the *château* for his travelling carriage.

"Now, Walters," said the captain, "send a boat into the

creek nearest the Château of Auray. Let all be ready aboard the frigate to weigh anchor this night."

The lieutenant walked away on the road to Port Louis, and the two friends went into the cottage.

During this time Emmanuel and Marguerite had accomplished the funeral duty, to which the knell had summoned them. The marquis had been laid in the emblazoned family vault, and Achard in the humble graveyard adjoining the chapel. Then the two had gone up to their mother, who transmitted the much-desired commission to Emmanuel, and the long-unexpected consent was given to Marguerite. Not to renew emotions all the more poignant as those by whom they were experienced concentrated them on themselves, mother and children embraced, for the last time, and parted with the inward conviction that they would never more see one another.

The rest of the day was spent in completing preparations for the departure.

Towards dusk the widow went out to keep the appointment made by Paul. On crossing the courtyard, she saw on one side a vehicle ready horsed, and on the other the young midshipman Arthur and two sailors. Her heart shrank at the sight of the double readiness. She continued her way and plunged into the park without yielding to this emotion, so much self-command having been gained by her long reaction of pride against nature.

Nevertheless, upon reaching a glade whence Achard's lodge was visible, she stopped from a trembling in her limbs under her, and leaning her back against a tree, she pressed her hand to her heart to lessen its throbs. Like such souls as present danger cannot daunt, but which tremble in the remembrance of a past one, she recalled to how many fears and emotions she had been the prey in the course of these twenty years, on every day of which she had come to this dwelling, closed now to reopen never more. Still she soon overcame this weakness, and resuming her way, reached the park gates.

There she paused again. Above all the other trees rose the top of a gigantic oak, its foliage perceptible from several parts of the grounds. The marchioness had often spent entire hours with her eyes fixed on its dome of verdure; but she had never ventured to repose under its shade. Yet here it was that she had promised to join Paul and he was waiting for her. At length she made an effort over herself, and entered the forest.

From afar she descried a man kneeling and praying: it was her son. She slowly approached and, kneeling also, she prayed with him. When the prayer was finished they both arose, and, without saying a word, the lady passed her arm around the young man's neck and rested her head on his shoulder. At the end of several seconds of stillness and quiet, the rumble of a carriage

came to them. The marchioness started and held up her finger for Paul to listen: it was Emmanuel going to join his regiment. At the same time Paul held out his hand in the opposite direction and pointed out to his mother a boat gliding lightly and silently over the surface of the sea: it was Marguerite taken aboard the Franco-American cruiser.

The marchioness listened to the wheels as long as she could hear them, and watched the boat as long as she could see; when one was lost in space and the other had disappeared in the gloom, she turned towards Paul, raised her eyes to Heaven, and, understanding that the parting hour had come for her supporter also, she said,

"May God bless, as I bless, the dutiful son who stayed the last beside his mother."

Collecting all her powers, she embraced the kneeling young man for the ultimate time and, tearing herself from his arms, she solitarily resumed the road home.

Next day the inhabitants of Port Louis vainly sought, in the place where they had still seen it on the eve, the frigate which had for a fortnight been stationed in the outer harbour. As before, it had disappeared without their being able to puzzle out either the cause of its arrival or the motive of its departure.

CHAPTER XIX.

OTHELLO'S OCCUPATION GONE.

FIVE years have elapsed since recorded events, and the independence of the United States of America had been acknowledged. New York, the last stronghold of the English, was being evacuated.

The roar of cannon, which had resounded at the same time in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, ceased to thunder on both waters. In the solemn session of Congress on the 28th December, 1783, Washington had resigned his commission of commander-in-chief and retired on his property of Mount Vernon, without other recompense than enjoying an exemption of postage on his correspondence. And the tranquility which America began to feel, extended to the French colonies of the Antilles which, having taken part in the war, had to defend themselves many times against hostile attempts.

Among these islands Guadaloupe had been most particularly menaced on account of its military and commercial importance; but, thanks to the vigilance of its new governor, the essays at disembarkation had always been frustrated, and France had no serious mishaps to deplore in this important possession; so that, about the commencement of the year 1783, the island, without having thrown aside a remnant of warlike aspect, preserved from habit rather than necessity, was almost entirely given up once more to the culture of the various productions which make its wealth.

If our readers will, by a final effort of kindness, accompany us across the Atlantic, and land with us in the Basse-Terre port, we will follow one of the streets which climb among fountains gushing out on all sides, to the public promenade of the Champ d'Arbaud; after profiting for the third of its length by the cool shade of the tamarind trees bordering both sides, we take a little beaten path conducting to the door of a garden which, in its higher part, overlooked the whole town.

After inhaling the evening breeze, so sweet on an April afternoon, let us throw a glance on the luxuriant nature of the tropics.

Our back being to the wooded, volcanic mountains separating the western part in two slopes, and showing the two calcined peaks, crowned by plumes of smoke and sparks, of La Soufrière, we have at

our feet, sheltered by the stagnant pools of Bellevue, Mont Désir, Beau Soleil, Esperance and St. Charles, the town, gracefully sloping to the sea, whose waves, sparkling in the last sunbeams, bathe its walls. On the horizon is the vast limpid mirror of the ocean, and on either hand the fairest and richest plantations : square coffee fields, the flexible, knotty stems of the plants showing lustrous. deep-toned leaves of pointed and wavy oblong shape, each holding up a bouquet of snow-white bloom ; the cotton fields, covering with a green carpet the dry and stony ground it likes, over which swarm, like colossal ants, the negroes busy in reducing to two or three shoots the thousands which spring from each stalk. On the other hand it is on the sheltered lands, rich and yielding, that the cacao-tree rises, its trunk slender, with porous branches wrapped in tawny bark, and lanceolated, alternating oblong leaves, among which the growing shoots resemble soft rosy flowers in contrast to the long, crooked, yellow fruit, bending the boughs beneath their weight. There are whole fields of tobacco. From place to place, sending up a straight stem, to tower forty or fifty feet above all the herbaceous vegetables surrounding it, rises the fig-tree of Paradise, of which the leaves, if we are to credit the Biblical tradition, oval, obtuse and seven or eight feet long, striped transversely like banderoles, formed our first parents' garments. Lastly, reigning over all, here outlined on the azure of the sky, there on the glaucous green of the sea, according to whether they grew on the beach or the mountain ridge, the two giants of the West Indies appeared, the palm and the cocoanut-palm, graceful and prodigal like all that is strong.

Picture the marvellous coast, cut into by seventy rivers encased in beds of eighty feet in depth ; mountains illuminated by day by the tropical sun, and by night by the volcano ; the ever-growing vegetation with leaves replacing the falling ones ; the ground so wholesome and the air so pure that—in spite of the mad trials of man, that enemy of himself—serpents imported have not been able to live or reproduce their kind ; and judge, after the sufferings they went through in Europe, what happiness must have been revelled in, since the five years they inhabited this earthly paradise, by Anatole de Lusignan and Marguerite d'Auray.

To the life agitated by passions and the contest of natural rights against legal power at the close of incidents in which nearly all terrestrial pains had flocked to play a part, a serene life had succeeded, with every day flowing calmly, and the only clouds being the vague uneasiness for far-away friends whose memory floated on the air at times and made the heart ache as with doleful presentiment.

Still, now and then, by public journals or the shipping news, the young couple learnt some tidings of the man who had so powerfully served as their protector; they knew of his victories; how, on leaving them, he had put himself at the head of a squadron and destroyed the settlement of Acadia, for which he had won the title of commodore; how in an engagement with the *Serapis* and the *Countess of Scarborough*, after a yard-arm fight lasting nearly four hours, he had forced the two frigates to surrender; and how, in short, in 1781, he had received in recompense for the service he had rendered the cause of Independence, the public thanks of Congress, which had voted him a gold medal and had chosen him to command the fine frigate, the *America*. That name had been given it as the finest of all, and its command was entrusted to him as the bravest; but this splendid vessel had been offered to the King of France by Congress to replace the *Magnifique*, lost at Boston, so that Paul Jones, after taking it over to Havre, had gone back on board the Count de Vaudreuil's fleet, on a projected expedition against Jamaica.

This last piece of intelligence had filled Lusignan and his wife with joy, for this enterprise would bring Paul near them, and they hoped at last to see their friend and brother; but, as stated, peace had come, and they had not heard of the adventurous seaman since that epoch.

On the evening of the day when we transport our readers from the wild coast of Brittany to the fertile shores of Guadaloupe, the young family, for there was a girl and a boy beside their parents, were assembled in the garden where we enter, dominating over the immense panorama of the town at its feet; the foreground and the islet-sprinkled ocean, the marvellous distance.

Marguerite had speedily become habituated to the careless indolence of colonial life, and, her mind being tranquil and happy, she swung herself, still pale, frail and graceful, as a wild lily, in the sweet *far niente* which makes the sensual Indian life a kind of slumber, and its incidents mere dreams. Reclining with her daughter in a Peruvian hammock, woven of the aloe's silken fibre, and embroidered with dazzling feathers, furnished by the rarest tropical birds, she was rocked by her son's gentle and regular impulsion.

One of her hands was in her husband's, and her gaze was lost in vacancy as she felt all the felicities promised from above, pervade her soul and senses, together with all the enjoyments earth can accord.

At this moment, as if everything concurred to complete the magical picture she contemplated every evening, but which she considered always more wondrous, like the monarch of the ocean a ship doubled the Three Points Cape, gliding over the sea without more effort, apparently, than a swan playing on a lake.

Marguerite was the first to perceive it, and, without speaking, for every action seemed a fatigue under that burning climate, she made a sign with her head to Lusignan, who directed his look whither she indicated, and, like her, silently watched the rapid and graceful course of the ship.

As it drew nearer, and the fine and elegant lines of its masts appeared among the mass of sails, at first seeming a cloud flitting on the horizon, they began to discern in the quarter of its flag, barred silver and red, the stars of America, standing out on the azure field in as many for number as there were United States.

The same idea struck them both at once, and their glances met, radiant with the hope that they were perchance going to learn news of Paul Jones.

Lusignan instantly ordered a negro to go for a telescope; but, before he had returned, a sweeter thought had also made the hearts of the young couple leap; they fancied they recognised the coming frigate as an old friend.

Still, to one not accustomed, it is so difficult to distinguish at a distance the signs which speak plainly to the mariner's eye, that they dared not yet believe in a hope appertaining more to instinctive presentiment than positive reality. At last the black returned, bearer of the desired instrument. Lusignan put it to his eye, and uttered a glad outcry as he handed it to his wife: he had recognised, at the bow, the carving of Guillaume Coustou, and that it was the *Indienne* which sped under full sail towards Basse Terre.

The governor lifted Marguerite from the hammock and placed her on her feet, for their original impulse was to run towards the port; but the idea struck her that the *Indienne*, which Captain Jones had left some five years ago, when a higher grade had given him the right to command a more powerful vessel, might be commanded by another officer, and they stopped, with throbbing heart and trembling limbs. During this, their son, Paul, had picked up the spyglass, and put it to his eye, as he had seen his parents alternately do.

"Father," said he, "look, look! there's an officer on the deck wearing a gold-embroidered black coat, like that in the picture of my good friend Paul."

Lusignan quickly took the telescope from the boy's hands and passed it anew to his wife, who lowered it after a space. They fell into one another's arms, for they had recognised the young captain, who, to show himself to his friends, had donned the costume most commonly worn by him.

At this moment the man-of-war passed by the fort, saluting with three guns, to which the land cannon similarly responded.

On the instant when the governor and his wife had acquired the certainty that it was really their friend and brother who again commanded the *Indienne*, they went down to the roads, followed by little

Paul, but leaving little Blanche in the hammock.

For his part, the American commodore had recognised them, so that, at the same time as they quitted their garden, he had ordered his cutter to be lowered, and, thanks to the redoubled efforts of ten vigorous oarsmen, he had rapidly crossed the space extending between the moorings and the shore, and sprang up on the wharf at the moment when his friends arrived.

Such sensations as theirs are without words, and are translated by looks and the pressure of the hand. The child was perplexed almost to tears by seeing the next to painful intensity of their expression.

After having given some orders relative to the ship, the young commodore slowly went the road with his friends which they had coursed over so rapidly to welcome him. The Vaudreuil expedition having been nipped in the bud, he had gone back to Philadelphia, and peace having been signed with England, as we related, Congress, as a keepsake of gratitude, had made him a gift of the first vessel he had commanded as a captain.

At this story, the governor and his wife had felt great gladness, as they hoped that their brother had come to dwell with them for ever; but the young sea-rover's spirit was too adventurous and too eager for sensations to be restricted to the uniform and colourless life of the dwellers on land. So he informed his friends that he had only a week to give them, after which he would go to another part of the world to seek a life to continue that previously led.

These seven days fled like a dream, and whatever the pleadings of the happy pair, Paul would not even grant them twenty-four hours more; he was still the ardent man, absolute and thorough, transforming the resolutions he framed into duty, and as strict for himself as for others.

The hour to quit came round. Marguerite and her husband wanted to accompany the young commodore on board his vessel, but he was not willing to prolong the pain of such a parting. On coming to the wharf, he embraced them for the last time, and jumped down into the boat, which was shoved off, and rowed away, rapid as an arrow.

The two watched it until it disappeared on the weatherside of the frigate, when they sadly went up the hill to see it sail away from the table-land where they had seen it arrive.

When they returned, the intelligent activity which precedes the starting, reigned on board of the man-of-war. The men, gathered round the capstan, began to wind up the cable and, thanks to the clearness of the air, their jolly and humorous song reached even the watchers. The ship slowly came up over its anchor; soon the double iron tooth was seen to rise out of the water while the sails fell successively from the yards, from the sky-topsails to the lower mast. As if endowed with an animate and instinctive feeling, she turned her prow

towards the harbour's mouth and began to move, sending the water aside as easily as if merely gliding over the surface.

As if, henceforward, the frigate might be left to her own volition, the young commodore was seen on the poop, turning his whole attention, become useless for working the ship, to the land he quitted.

Lusignan drew his handkerchief and waved it as a signal, to which Paul Jones responded. When it was no longer possible for them to see anything with naked eye, each had recourse to the glass, thanks to which, they delayed the separation for an hour longer, that all three sentimentally thought would be eternal.

At last the cruiser gradually diminished on the horizon at the same time as night fell from the sky. Then the governor ordered wood to be brought on the table-land, and a fire kindled, in order that Commodore Jones's gaze—when the frigate began to be lost in the obscurity—might still dwell on the beacon until he doubled the headland of the Trois-Pointes.

An hour since Marguerite and her husband lost sight of the vessel, though their fire might not be completely invisible on board, a flame like a flash of lightning furrowed the horizon, and, in a few seconds, subsequently, the peal of a cannon-shot came to their ears, resembling the dull, prolonged rumble of thunder; then all sank into darkness and silence.

Lusignan and Marguerite had received the last farewell of Paul Jones.

CHAPTER XX.

AFTER THE FITFUL FEVER.

ALTHOUGH the domestic tragedy which we had to relate really might terminate here, some of our readers will have, perchance, taken enough interest in the young adventurer, our hero, to desire to follow him to the last of his career. For them we shall simply unfold the facts.

In the month of May, 1784, all Europe had almost fallen back into that state of torpor which men without foresight took for tranquility, but which more profound minds regarded as the dead and momentary lull preceding the tempest.

By her enfranchisement America had prepared France for her Revolution: distrustful of one another, kings and peoples held off, on their guard, one invoking fact, the other right.

Amid this general slumber only one point of Europe seemed living and agitated: it was Russia, which the Czar Peter had lifted into the rank of civilized states, and Catherine II commenced inscribing in the number of European powers.

Peter III—become odious to the Russians by a spirit without nobility, political views without extent, and particularly by his idolatry for Prussian manners and military discipline—had been deposed without opposition, and strangled without a struggle.

At the age of thirty-two, Catherine, therefore, became mistress of an empire covering the seventh part of the globe. Her first care had been to impose herself as mediatrix by virtue of her power itself upon the neighbouring peoples whom she wished to elevate with herself.

Thus she forced the Courlanders to drive away their new duke, Charles of Saxony, and recall Biren; she had sent her ambassadors and armies to crown her former gallant, Poniatowski, at Warsaw, under the name of Stanislaus Augustus; she had allied herself with England; she had associated the courts of Berlin and Vienna in her policy; and yet these grand projects of foreign politics had not made her forget internal administration. She had found time to reward industry, encourage agriculture, reform legislation, create a navy; in short, jealous of the King of Prussia's literary reputation, she had with the same hand signed the decree for a new city, as she did the death

sentence of young Ivan, the partition of Poland, the "Refutation" of the Abbé Chappé's "Travels in Siberia," a romance "The Czarowitch Chlorus," theatrical pieces, etc., so that Voltaire had called her the "Semiramis of the North," and the King of Prussia had placed her between Lycurgus and Solon in his letters.

The effect may be imagined which was produced in her chivalric and voluptuous court by the arrival of such a man as our American admiral. The reputation of courage which had made him the terror of the foes of France and the United States, had preceded him before the empress, and in exchange for his present of his frigate, she made him a rear-admiral.

Thereupon the flag of Russia, after covering the Old World, appeared in the Grecian Archipelago, and, on the ruins of Lacedæmon and the Parthenon, the man who had helped accomplish the freedom of the Colonies dreamed of the re-establishment of the Republics of Sparta and Athens. At last the old Ottoman Empire was shaken to its base, and the beaten Turks signed the peace.

Become ruler over the Taurus, Catherine wished to view her new possession. Recalled to St. Petersburg, Paul Jones accompanied her in the journey traced out by Potemkin, over a road a thousand leagues long, ending under an arch of triumph, with this inscription, revealing Potemkin's policy if not his sovereign's ambition.—"This is the highway to Byzantium!"

Thereupon Russia settled down in tyranny as America was doing in independence.

Catherine offered her admiral places to satisfy a courtier, honours to glut the ambitious, and estates to console a monarch for having lost his kingdom; but it was the rocking deck of his vessel, the sea with combats and tempests, and the boundless ocean, which our poetical and adventurous seaman required. So he quitted Catherine's brilliant court as he had the dull Hall of Congress, and went to France to seek what was elsewhere lacking, a life of emotion, with enemies to contend with and a people to defend.

He arrived in Paris amid European wars and civil strife. The king whom, ten years before he had seen cherished, honoured and powerful, was at present a scorned and powerless captive. All that had been lofty was abased, and the grandest names rolled in the gutter like the haughtiest heads.

It was the reign of equality, and the guillotine was the leveller.

Paul Jones asked after the Marquis d'Auray; he heard that he was exiled. As for his mother, they said she was dead.

An immensely pressing need seized him, then, once more to visit, before he died also, the spot where he had experienced emotions so sweet and so painful twelve years previously.

He started for Brittany, left the post-chaise at Vannes, and rode over as he had on the day when he first saw Marguerite; but he was no longer the enthusiastic young seaman, with boundless hopes and desires, but a man disillusionized in everything because he had tasted of everything, gall and wormwood; studied all exhaustively, men and things; known all, glory and oblivion.

He did not come to seek kindred, but graves.

On coming in view of the family mansion, he turned his eyes towards Achard's cottage, but, not seeing it, he tried to look about in the wood, but it had vanished as by enchantment. It had been sold as national property to twenty-five or thirty farmers of the neighbourhood, who had cleared it off and made a vast plain there. The great oak had disappeared, and the plough had passed over the Count de Morlaix's unsuspected grave, so that the eye of his own son could not recognise the place.

He went through the park gateway and advanced towards the great house, sadder and gloomier at this hour than hitherto; there was only an old caretaker there, a living wreck in the midst of these dead ruins. The intention had been to raze the manor-house as they had the forest, but the marchioness's reputation for sanctity, religiously preserved in the country, had protected the old stones which had sheltered her family for four centuries.

Paul visited the rooms unopened since three years, but opened for him. He went through the gallery of portraits, but no pious hand had added to the collection those of the marquis and marchioness. He entered the library where he had hidden himself, finding at the same place a book which he had opened; he read again what he had read before, then, pushing the door opening into the hall of the contract, he stepped in where had been enacted the most lively scenes of the tragedy of which he had been the principal actor. The table stood in the same place, and the Venetian glass was still there, over the chimney-piece, shattered by Emmanuel's bullet. He went up to the shelf, and, leaning on it, asked details of the marchioness's declining years.

They were stern and plain, like all they knew about her. Remaining alone in the *château*, her entire life had passed uniformly in three different places, her oratory, the vault where her husband slept, and the spot shaded by the oak. During eight years after the evening when Paul had, for the last time, taken leave of her, she had been seen wandering in the old corridors and darksome paths, pale and slow as a ghost. At length an affection of the heart had broken out, caused by the emotions amassed in her bosom; she grew weaker and more weak; until one afternoon when she could not walk, she bade them carry her to the foot of the oak, her favourite sojourn, once more to see the sun go down in the ocean, she said, ordering that

they were to come for her in half an hour. On their return, her servants found her in a swoon. They carried her home; she came to life on the way, and, instead of being helped up to her room, ordered her transportation to the family vault. There she found the strength to kneel by her husband's tomb, and wave them away with her hand. Whatever imprudence was in doing so, she was obeyed, for she was habituated never to repeat an order. Nevertheless, instead of going altogether out, the attendants remained in a recess, in order to be ready to help her. The next instant they saw her lie down on the stone before which she prayed. They only thought that she had fainted again, but on running up, they found she was dead.

Paul bade the man lead him into the crypt, which he entered slowly, with lowered head; at the stone over his mother's grave he knelt. It showed this inscription (still to be seen in one of the chapels of the church of the little town of Auray, whither it was since carried) the marchioness, before she died, had dictated it.

"HERE LIES THE
MOST NOBLE AND PUISSANT
DAME MARGUERITE BLANCHE
DE SABLÉ,
MARCHIONESS D'AURAY,
BORN AUGUST 2, 1729;
DIED SEPTEMBER 2, 1788.

Pray for her Soul, and those of "All" her Children.

Paul raised his eyes to heaven with an infinite expression of gratitude. His mother, who had so long forgotten him in life, had remembered him in her mortuary record.

Six months afterwards, the National Convention decreed in solemn session that it would be present at the obsequies of Paul Jones, ex-Commodore of the American Navy, who had died in Paris the 7th of July, 1793, and whose interment would take place in the Pére-la-Chaise Cemetery. The decree says that the decision was come to "for consecrating the freedom of creeds in France."

THE END.

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